Título: Guided by the moon- shamanism and the ritual use of ayahuasca in the Santo Daime religion in Brazil

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In memoriam,

Padrinho Sebastião Mota de Melo

Alan Godfrey Gonçalves MacRae

Glauco Rodrigues Bueno

Severino do Ramo

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CONTENTS

Introduction - Psychoactive Substances and Shamanism

Although it first appeared in the Brazilian Amazon in the 1930s, it is only within the past two decades that the Santo Daime religion has spread throughout Brazil and to many other countries. Nevertheless, this growth might be considered negligeable if compared to other religions that have appeared in Brazil during this period. Although the celebrity status of some of its followers and the sacramental use of "ayahuasca", a brew with psychoactive properties, have contributed to awaken media interest, more often than not, Santo Daime has been portrayed in a discriminatory and sensationalist manner.

This work proposes to delve more deeply into the religion’s origins, while focusing on the use of this sacred brew. The goal is to analyze the values and the social controls that guide its use by the religion’s adherents.

Much is said about the dangers involved in the non-medical use of psychoactive substances. These substances are generally stigmatized and considered to be the cause of physical and moral degeneration. When it does not attract outrage or ridicule, any dissenting opinion on this matter is studiously ignored. For this reason, I shall be dealing with a case that flies in the face of this demonization – that of "ayahuasca". Technically labeled a hallucinogen, this brew constitutes the central sacrament of Santo Daime, a religion that mixes Indian and African elements with esoteric practices, all beneath a veneer of Christianity. According to the various academic studies concerning this religion, its followers are ordinary people, differing from other Brazilians only in their religions zeal and in their rather rigid adhesion to certain values which are, nevertheless, part of the fundamental ethical standards of Brazilian culture.

In order to better understand the phenomenon of a psychoactive substance having an opposite effect to that which is stressed by the advocates of the "war on drugs", one should start by rethinking certain common expressions.

As such, throughout this book I shall avoid using the word "drug" wherever possible, in order to downplay the emotional charge and pejorative connotations which often inhibit new thinking on the subject. The term "psychoactive substance" seems to be preferable due to its descriptive nature and to the fact that it clearly places those which are licitly consumed and accepted by mainstream society alongside illicit products consumed by stigmatized minorities.

Also, when dealing with ritual contexts, I prefer to avoid the term "hallucinogen" due to its implications regarding the nature of the perceptions produced by the ingestion of certain substances. A "hallucination" is usually taken to mean “a perception of objects with no reality” and to “halllucinate” is, to fool oneself, to be deprived of reason or understanding, to go mad. From the outset, such a word would tend to invalidate the beatific perceptions of transcendental states of communication with the spiritual world, which, according to the beliefs of many creeds and to the experiences of their followers, many attain on taking such substances.

- These considerations have led some to propose alternative terms such as "psychedelic"(1) and "phan-erotism(2)." I prefer "entheogens", derived from the classic Greek "entheos", signifying, literally, "god within" – a term used to describe the state of mind of a person inspired or possessed by a deity. Traditionally associated with prophetic trances, artistic creativity and erotic passion, it has been applied as well to religions rites in which mystical states were experienced through the ingestion of substances partaking of the divine essence. Thus, "entheogen" means that which leads to the individual having the divine within him(3).

Studying the effects of the traditional use of entheogens

Three factors must be taken into consideration, when discussing the relationship between psychoactive substances, their users and their social environment.

1 - The "drug" or psychoactive substance and its effect on human physiology.

2 - The "set" - The individual's psychological state of mind at the moment the substance is used, as well as his personality structure and his expectations as to the effects of the substance.

3 - The physical, cultural, social "setting" - where the substance is used.

Most studies by doctors and psychologists tend to emphasize the two former items. In this work, however, the "setting" will be the main focus of attention in an attempt to understand the experiences of those who consume the entheogen.

Although commonly accepted today, this triple view of the factors governing the effects produced by the use of psychoactive substances only became widespread in the ‘60s. One of the first to develop this notion was the American psychologist Timothy Leary, better known as an advocate for the generalized use of LSD. Leary claimed that in order to have a positive "psychedelic experience", it was essential that both the "set", the subject´s expectations of the effects to be experienced, and the physical setting, be conducive to a tranquil and harmonious experience.

Far from advocating uncontrolled drug use, Leary and his collaborator, Ralph Metzner, proposed programmed psychedelic experiences. These were based on shamanic practices, such as the ritual use of peyote by Mexican Indians and the recitation of the Tibetan funeral texts known as "The Book of the Dead". These experiments called attention to details such as background music and appropriate food. They also emphasized the need for a more experienced person to take on the role of guide, acting as a shaman, conducting the session and avoiding "bad trips". The very concept of the experience with entheogens, as a voyage or "trip", had its origin in the shamanic model.

Although the expression "shaman" – which has now become commonplace in anthropological literature - was borrowed from the language spoken by the Tungs, in Siberia, today it has expanded to embrace widespread practices throughout the world. In a shamanic rite, an inspired visionary, the shaman, goes into a state of trance. With the help of protecting spirits, he travels in this "separate reality" in which he encounters assorted spiritual beings that can bring aid to members of his community(4). The

intention might be to diagnose and treat certain illnesses, to divine or prophesize, or simply to acquire power through contact with spirits, “power animals”, “ allies” and other spiritual entities(5).

Such a trance, or voyage, occurs during what psychologists call an "altered state of consciousness", a label which embraces different kinds of experiences during which the subject is under the impression that the usual workings of his conscience are transformed. Such alterations place him in a different relationship with the world, with himself, with his body, with his identity(6). Such states of consciousness might occur spontaneously or be induced by meditation techniques, breathing exercises, fasting or by the ingestion of psychoactive substances.

Leary's work rekindled interest in shamanism and in altered states of consciousness in the ‘60s and ‘70s. Like him, other scholars began to observeIndian rites, mainly in Central and South America, where states of trance were produced by the use of psychoactive substances or by other means such as percussion instruments. Other researchers adopted an opposite method, trying to produce the phenomenon under more controlled conditions, usually by administering hallucinogens to volunteers in hospitals or laboratories.

Aside from observing Indian practices and describing them in ethnographic reports, anthropologists also made transcultural comparisons, documenting the many ways these substances are used. Simultaneously, they studied the role played by cultural variables, such as beliefs, attitudes, expectations and values, all of which contribute to the structuring of the entheogen experience.

SCHEME FOR DRUG-INDUCED VISIONARY EXPERIENCE (Figure 1)[7]

ANTECEDENT VARIABLES → **CONSEQUENT VARIABLES**

BIOLOGICAL

body weight
physical condition → EFFECTS OF THE DRUG: ex.: synaesthesia, depersonalization, psychological and somatic changes
special diets
sexual abstinence

PSYCHOLOGICAL

set (motivation, attitudes) →
mood
past experiences

SOCIAL-INTERACTIONAL

group/individual participants
nature of the group →
ritual performance
presence of a guide

CULTURAL

enculturation and shared symbolic system
expectations of visionary content →
nonverbal adjuncts, such as music and pleasant odors
belief systems
values

Marlene Dobkin de Rios, a North-American anthropologist who studied the use of ayahuasca by Peruvian healers, suggests that effects may be conditioned as much by the set and the immediate environment as by additional factors such as beliefs regarding the use of plants. These variables may precede or follow

the administration of the substances. The anthropologist, doing fieldwork, cannot usually measure variables like somatic reactions, intellectual or moral ability, changes in visual perception and other consecutive effects. He can, however, contribute with the study of antecedent variables, an area whose theoretical aspects still remain to be fully developed. He can focus on the users' belief system, and the use made of the visionary content, as well as the community's expectations concerning the oft-reported occurrence of determined visions.

Thus, for an anthropological understanding of the experience induced by entheogens(7), Dobkin de Rios proposes the scheme in Figure 1.

In traditional cultures, psychoactive substances are usually taken in a ritual context. Researchers consider this to be the reason why such use seldom has harmful effects The model proposed by the late Norman E. Zinberg, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, who studied the use of illicit psychoactive substances, may help us understand this phenomenon better.

Zinberg developed this scheme in the '70s, while leading a research team in a study of the use of Cannabis and LSD. The study's aim was to understand why the rapid expansion of these psychoactive substances amongst the American population was not being followed by the catastrophic effects that many had considered inevitable. Zinberg's research also focused on the use of heroin, reviving a former interest of his which dated back to 1968. During this period, he spent time in Britain examining a system in which addicts were prescribed heroin by their doctors. Zinberg found that many of these addicts functioned successfully and lived relatively normal lives. Although there were others who had more serious problems, he observed that, unlike many American "junkies", even these more problematic addicts were not resorting to crime or acting aggressively towards others. His observations led him to conclude that the differences between British and American addicts were attributable to their different social settings- i.e., to the two country's varying social and legal attitudes with respect to heroin. Years later, continuing his research in America, he also discovered that despite heroin's ability to provoke quick and intense physical and psychological dependence, there was a small group of users that did not succumb to addiction.

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In order to explain this phenomenon, Zinberg begins by stressing the importance of the three different types of factors that determine the effects of drug taking (his book is appropriately called "Drug, Set and Setting"). In the book, Zinberg makes a distinction between "controlled" and "compulsive" uses. The first has low social costs while the second is dysfunctional and intense and its social costs are high. The difference between both is that "controlled "use is governed by values and rules of conduct (which he calls "social sanctions") and patterns of behavior (called "social rituals") shared by groups of users. These "social controls" are part of the social setting and function in four basic and overlapping ways:
-defining acceptable uses and condemning compulsive ones
-limiting use to physical and social settings that are conducive to positive or safe experiences
-identifying potentially negative effects. Rituals embody the precautions to be taken before and during use.
-compartmentalizing different types of substance use and supporting the users' non-drug-related obligations and relationships (Zinberg 1984:17).

The "social rituals" are stylized, prescribed behavior patterns surrounding the controlled use of the substance. They take into consideration methods of procuring and administering the substance, the selection of the physical and social setting, the activities undertaken after administration, and the ways of preventing undesired effects. These rituals serve to buttress, reinforce, and symbolize the sanctions (Zinberg 1984:5).

As one can see, this approach has much in common with that proposed by Dobkin de Rios. Thus, the biological antecedents are seen to act on the pharmacological aspects of the substance itself (the "drug") – with the psychological aspects limiting the "set" and the social, interactive and cultural variables corresponding to the "setting". Interestingly, Zinberg's social sanctions and rituals reflect Dobkin de Rios's notion of "cultural variables".

Aside from emphasizing the importance of social aspects – such as the ritual and the presence of an experienced guide - Dobkin de Rios considers the existence of a cultural system, shared by all, to be crucial to the success of the experience. This allows the shaman, or guide, to lead the experience of the subject in the direction of the desired goals.

These models form the basis of my understanding of the ritual use of entheogens. My aim is to try to establish a relationship between the experiences that follow the ritualized ingestion of "ayahuasca" while examining their cultural basis. Yet, one must not forget that certain themes reoccur with unexpected regularity in experiences of individuals that come from different cultural traditions. Thus there are many reports -derived from various cultural contexts - of altered perceptions of time, of animals revealing to man

the characteristics of certain plants, of the part played by music in evoking visions. The association of plants and spiritual beings, shamanic transformations of humans into "familiar" animals, and other paranormal phenomena such as telepathy and precognition are frequent themes(10).

Similarly, scientific experiments performed on subjects from modern urban environments, who did not know what was being administered to them, have led to reports that echo stories related by Indians. A case in point was an experiment involving 35 white Chileans who, after taking harmaline - one of the alkaloids found in "ayahuasca" – evoked a variety of experiences ranging from flying and seeing landscapes from high vantage points to encountering serpents, crocodiles, and other reptiles, as well as tigers, leopards, cats, birds, and vampires. Fifteen of those interviewed also reported having visions, feelings and concerns of a religious nature involving devils, angels, the Virgin, Christ and mystical ecstatic states. Other visions of a mystical nature involved classic fairy-tale settings and themes such as castles, kings, medieval clothes, etc.(11)

To Claudio Naranjo, who carried out this research, such experiences seem to represent "being" and "becoming", freedom and need, spirit and matter, all of which constitute the essence of the human condition , with the eternal struggle between good and evil, and the final reconciliation and fusion of both through surrender to death and destruction. The result is an essentially religious process which evokes the central themes of human life. These findings led Naranjo to consider certain shamanic concepts as expressions of universal experiences capable of transcending local culture and traditions(12).

Other scholars, using different substances, have also witnessed these mystic-religious elements. This seems to indicate that although such visions may be partially attributed to the subject's culture, certain elements seem more deeply linked with the psyche. Such elements manifest themselves as what one might call a mystical feeling towards the cosmos, which, at least potentially, is a possibility open to all humankind.

Reflecting the aforementioned theoretical stance which places emphasis on the importance of the "setting", this book stresses the social-cultural context of the use of "ayahuasca" in the Santo Daime rituals as well as its Indian and mestizo origins in the Amazon region. Although the majority of the ethnographic material mentioned in the two chapters devoted to the subject refers to the Amazon regions

of Peru and Bolivia, I consider that the homogeneity of the region – indicated by many other researchers - means that this information may also be considered relevant to the study of this religion from the Brazilian Amazon.

The origin and development of the Santo Daime religion and its relationship with both Amazonian and Brazilian culture in the twentieth century constitute the themes of the third chapter. Chapter 4 delves further into the description and discussion of various rituals where the entheogen is used. Using Zinberg's theories as a starting point, Chapter 5 examines the informal social control developed among the Santo Daime followers in their daily life, with particular emphasis on rituals. In conclusion, Chapter 6 seeks to understand the relationship between these practices of mestizo or "Caboclo" origin and the urban milieux of Southeast Brazil's large cities, where this religion has been attracting followers among the more educated and liberal segments of middle-class youth. Indeed, such an interest seems to be related to the so-called "New Religious Consciousness" that is particularly widespread among these segments of the population and which can be observed in the growing importance attributed to mystical, oriental or esoteric aspects of the so-called "New Age Culture".

As for the participant observation method I adopted in this study, there are a few points I would like to make concerning my research and my own personal experiences with the religion.

I first became aware of Santo Daime in 1988, while doing research on the use and the prevention of the abuse of psychoactive substances at the "Centro de Estudos do Instituto de Medicina Social e Criminologia de São Paulo". With my interest piqued - both academically and existentially - I took part in the founding of the "Flor das Águas" (Water-flower) Santo Daime church in São Paulo, that same year. I have since taken part regularly in many sessions, during which I have taken the brew along with the other participants.

In taking part in the use of this substance, I was following the example of other researchers studying the "Santo Daime", "ayahuasca" and the ritual use of other entheogens. This method has been adopted by some of the most influential researchers working on postgraduate dissertations, scientific reports and classic works on similar subjects.

The objection that the ingestion of the brew presupposes an inclination, even if slight, towards conversion – i.e., to taking part in the religious activities of the group - would apply to almost any case in which an anthropologist studying religious groups takes part in their rituals. Of course, one must not allow native categories to contaminate one's work, but, as Malinowski himself pointed out, the anthropologist cannot remain isolated from the daily practices of the subjects he is studying without running the risk of missing important data and "insights".

In order to maintain objectivity, I relied on the various resources normally used by anthropologists working in the field, as well as on my own experience, acquired during previous research both for my Ph.D. degree and during the four subsequent years I spent with users of different psychoactive substances.

As to the personal impact of these experiences, although they have not always been pleasant, they have, on many occasions, led me to face aspects of my life and personality that I would otherwise have tended to ignore. I also feel I have managed to tune in to a kind of inner voice which, in moments of doubt and confusion, has suggested to me the appropriate course of action . So, from my own personal experience, I consider my participation in these rites to have been highly positive, especially when they reminded me of the importance of living in accordance with the daimista principles of love, harmony, truth and justice.

For the purposes of this book however, I have tried to put aside such subjective questions. In doing so, I hope to have given a picture of the "Santo Daime" that is in accordance with the methods and concepts current in the discipline of Social Anthropology.

Notes

1 - Humfry Osmond proposed this term, later popularized by Timothy Leary and Ralph Mezner.

2 - Term proposed by Aldous Huxley for mescaline.

3 - See "Entheogens" in Journal of Psychedelic Drugs, vol. 2, n. 1 and 2, January and June, 1969, by Carl A.P. Ruck, Jeremy Bigwood, Danny Staples, Jonathan Ott, Gordon Wasson.

4 - Hult Krantz, 1989:47.

5 - Harner, 1989:14.

6 - Lapassade, 1987:5.

7 - Dobkin de Rios, 1990:215.

8 - Zinberg, 1984:5.

9 - Zinberg, 1984:152.

10 - Dobkin de Rios, 1977:294.

11 - Naranjo, 1976:201.

12 - Naranjo, 1976:204.

1. Shamanism in the Western Amazon - Ayahuasca, the Shaman and the "Vegetalista"

Before beginning a discussion on the Santo Daime religion, one should examine the different uses of ayahuasca in the Western Amazon where, since time immemorial, this brew has been taken by Indian groups, and more recently, by the mestizo or "caboclo" population, as it is called in Brazil.

This chapter is primarily based on bibliographical research and borrows heavily from the work of the anthropologists Luis Eduardo Luna and Marlene Dobkin de Rios. Their studies focused primarily on the activities of mestizo" healers from the Peruvian Amazon, concentrating mainly in the towns of Iquitos and Puccalpa. The fact that these works were carried out in Peru does not diminish their importance for the understanding of the Santo Daime . After all, the founder of this Brazilian religion, Raimundo Irineu Serra, was first initiated into the use of the entheogen in a part of the forest straddling the frontier between Brazil and Peru. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that various countries share its territory, the Amazon region is considered to be remarkably homogenous from a cultural standpoint.

In fact, research has shown that despite the many differences between the various Indian ethnic groups, all usually possess a shaman who is socially endowed with very similar characteristics, functions and techniques. As in other parts of the world, communities believe their shaman capable of establishing contact with the supernatural world and its denizens, as well as acting on their behalf to ensure healing , devining, good hunting, and avoidance of natural catastrophes as well as organisation of religious ceremonies.

With a few exceptions, this role is usually played by men. It is believed that a shaman’s powers are acquired by personal vocation, by the will of supernatural beings and, sometimes, by inheritance. The circumstances under which the discovery of this gift is made vary, but might include the sudden apparition of an ancestor or an animal spirit or even the occurrence of certain types of psychosomatic crises.

It is believed that the shaman receives his powers from the spirits. This may happen directly, through inspiration, or after initiation, under the supervision of a more experienced master. This initiation often entails a long period of time spent in isolation and the observation of strict dietary and sexual control. Contact with the spiritual world is often achieved through altered states of consciousness brought about by

eating certain plants and by using tobacco. In this state the shaman feels his spirit is capable of flying and of experiencing unusual perceptions. He must then try to listen to orders the spirits may give him as well as pay attention to songs or melodies they may whisper to him. This is the only way he can learn their secrets and share in their power.

The shaman's power is conceived of as a magic substance which is stored in different objects such as thorns, arrows or quartz crystals. The more of these objects he possesses, the greater his power. The shaman always carries these objects with him and identifies them with his helping spirits. To the other members of his community he is an ambivalent figure, and often treated with suspicion, since he is considered to have not only the power of healing, but also that of doing harm (1).

The shamans are usually very knowledgeable about the forest and the use of plants for healing and other purposes. They are also specialists in the use of entheogens, mainly as a means of establishing contact with the spirit world. One of the most frequently used substances is the brew made out of the combination of "Banisteropsis caapi" and the "Psychotria viridis" leaf, to which many other plants can be added. This preparation has a many names, ranging from "natema" and "yagé" to "nepe", "kabi", and "caapi". But it is generically known by the name of ayahuasca, a quechua expression meaning " vine of the spirits".

Both anthropologists and botanists have listed the many functions of this brew:

1 - Ayahuasca and the supernatural:

a- Magic and religious rituals. In order to receive divine direction and communicate with plant spirits or to receive a protective spirit.

b- Divining- to detect the approach of strangers; to discover the whereabouts of enemies and their plans; to detect marital infidelity; to see into the future .

c- Witchcraft- To cause illness by psychic means; as a prevention against the evil intentions of others.

2 - Ayahusca and Healing - to determine the cause of illness and to cure it.

3 - Ayahuasca, pleasure and social interaction - to bring on pleasurable or aphrodisiac states of mind, to strengthen sexual activity, to attain ecstasy or a state of drunkenness; to facilitate social interaction (2).

These days, the Indian population is a minority in the region; and mestizos - the descendants of Indians and Portuguese, Spaniards and Africans - are predominant. Nevertheless, in spite of the radical changes brought about by Iberian colonization, missionary activity, the rubber economy and the exodus of the forest dwellers towards regional urban centers, shamanic practices continue. Although they may present considerable changes and are continually subjected to varied influences; among the "caboclo" healers, or "vegetalistas" as they are often known, these practices still maintain elements of ancient Indian plant lore, including both their usages and their relationship with the spiritual world.

The characterization of these practicioners as "caboclos" must be taken more from a socio-cultural point of view than from a racial one. Among the vegetalistas, many could pass for Spaniards, Portuguese or Italians, while others boast Indian features. But, though they may use Spanish as a mother-tongue, in ideological terms, caboclos operate according to the diffuse and complex cultural patterns of the Upper Amazon. The group in whose name they claim to enter into contact with the spiritual world is no longer a distinct community. It is not even an ethnic group. Nevertheless it does have well defined contours and within them, this type of healer plays an important role.

Rather than alluding to shamans’ use of many different plants in their work, the term "vegetalista" refers to the origin of their knowledge, in which spirits of certain plants are believed to be their instructors. Called "doctors", the healers attribute to these plants both their knowledge of medicine and of magical elements - songs, melodies and the phlegm (?) - that are the shaman's working tools. Although the most important plant teacher may be "ayahuasca", many other plants are also used which are generally added to the basic mixture of the liana and the leaf. Significantly, it is the brew that provides the initial access to the spirit of the plants and allows one to employ their healing powers.

The mestizo shaman is a direct descendant of the Indian shaman whose secrets were passed on to the rubber-tappers living in the forest. Isolated from Western society, these mestizos had to resort to Indian medical knowledge. Their shamans were concerned mainly with healing, and manipulated spiritual powers in order to cure physical, financial and emotional problems.

Among the mestizo population there are many types of practitioners, known as healers "empiricos" or "vegetalistas". They are often called "master", "doctor", "little old man" or "grandfather". In certain cases, "vegetalistas", who are greatly respected for their vast knowledge and powers are also called "bancos" ("benches") . They lie down, faces turned to the ground, and allow themselves to be taken over by spirits. As such, this desigation probably refers to their being (?) the resting place of power. "Vegetalistas" are also called "sorcerers" or "witches" - usually with a pejorative connotation – in allusion to their capacity for doing evil (3).

"Vegetalistas" tend to be marginalized and looked down upon by the dominant classes. This does not usually bother them, however, for they are highly respected by their own communities where their influence is much greater than that of the local medical authorities who are frequently incapable of perceiving or understanding their patients' daily problems.

The vegetalistas may belong to various age groups, though, as informers, Luna chose older people, mostly over sixty. In spite of their advanced age, he considered them to be physically strong, outstandingly healthy and lucid, and among the brightest members of their communities, with an impressive general knowledge. They often proved to be wonderful story tellers, endowed with artistic talent and amazing memories. Such observations coincide with those made in other parts of the world and refutes the cliché of the shaman as a psychotic and unbalanced individual, often portrayed in popular literature (4).

These elderly men represent a transitional shamanism, on the verge of extinction, that still preserves the Indian knowledge of plants. The younger men, though they still use ayahuasca, are more urbanized and tend to substitute the detailed knowledge of plants for esoteric traditions of European origin. From an economic point of view, the older men occupy an intermediary position between a subsistence agricultural system of small land owners and the market economy. In their youth, most had

close contact with the forest, allowing them both to know its flora and fauna and to witness its more recent destruction. In their later years, they have had a prolonged exposure to urban life .

The "Vegetalista's" Initiation

Throughout the world there are both many examples of cultures with shamanic traditions and many ways of attaining the status of shaman. One can be called to be a shaman by means of a dream or a vision. Or a new shaman may be chosen by an older shaman to be trained as his successor. In some cases, at the end of the training period, public ceremonies may be held to mark the beginner's initiation, although, this may not be the actual initiation itself, which usually occurs prior to formal recognition by the community (5).

Because the “vegetalistas” fail to identify themselves with any specific tribal group and have no community support, there is no public ritual to mark their recognition as "vegetalistas". Their initiation is a question of personal choice or of vocation and their acceptance as "vegetalistas" by the community and themselves only occurs gradually. It's a very individualistic process, in which a beginner feels as if he is receiving lessons directly from plants and spirits (6) rather than learning from an experienced master.

Initiations usually start with the use of tobacco and ayahuasca. It is the individual's personality, his ability to withstand difficult training, and the physical and psychological dangers it involves that determine his degree of development (7). When this process takes place under the guidance of a more experienced shaman, it is his function to protect the beginner against bad spirits and sorcerers, as much as to teach him about the diets and the rules he must follow in order to attain power.

The correct use of plants is one of the main ways of acquiring the knowledge needed for their future shamanic practices. The plants "open" the shamans’ minds allowing them to study fauna and flora and, later, to remember what they have learned. The plants communicate with the shamans through visions and dreams, transmitting "wisdom", "strength", and certain physical capacities such as the ability to support winds, rains and floods.

In the life stories of the "vegetalistas", certain patterns, also found among Indian shamans, seem to repeat themselves. The shamans usually begin by suffering some serious illness characterized by physiological symptoms that official medicine is reportedly unable to cure. They then resort to a "vegetalista" or take ayahuasca on their own, which allows them not only to heal themselves, but to develop the ability of healing others as well. According to Mircea Eliade, a student of religions in general and of shamanism in particular, this is how shamans learn the mechanisms or the theory of illness (8). However not all novices who receive the teachings of the plants become healers. Their interests may be more philosophical than humanitarian in nature, since the knowledge of the art of healing is only one of the aspects of the teachings transmitted in this way.

One of the main aspects of the apprenticeship during this period of initiation is the observance of a dietary and sexual discipline, which all of Luna's informants considered essential if the plants were to reveal their lessons. The rules for this are either passed on to the beginner by an instructor or directly by the plants themselves.

The length of time during which these precepts must be observed may vary from six months to twelve years. Often the beginner must leave his place of residence and go into the forest or to some lonely spot, where the teachings might be received more directly from nature. After some time, their diet might be suspended, to be taken up again later on. In certain cases, even experienced "vegetalistas" undergo their diet (?) for shorter periods, in order to renew their energy and increase their knowledge. This period determines how much knowledge and power will be gained from different plants .

The main function of the diet is to cleanse the organism. This allows the plants to act to their full potential and reduces the negative effects produced by the mixing of certain kinds of food and the plants. The ideal diet generally consists of boiled plantain, certain types of smoked fish and the flesh of a few forest animals. Some "ayahuasqueros" also consider rice and manioc to be acceptable, but salt, sugar and other spices, fats, alcohol, pork, chicken, red meat, fruit, beans and cold drinks are usually avoided. Although the details of the different prescribed diets may vary considerably, all shamans insist on the importance of not eating pork.

There are many rules pertaining to the question of contact with the opposite sex. The dieting must be accompanied by total sexual abstinence and men must avoid any contact with women in their fertile years. Food must be prepared by girls who have not yet started having their periods or by women in menopause.

Similar restrictions are followed during the preparation of certain medicines, love potions and during other shamanic activities, as well as before and after using of ayahuasca and other teacher plants.

All "vegetalistas" claim that following the diet is the road to wisdom (9). They say it does not weaken anyone and, although they might lose some weight, those who follow the diet become stronger and more resistant. Even their natural odor changes. They also claim that while on the diet their minds function differently and their memories and powers of observation improve remarkably. Nature herself can then reveal her secrets. Dreams become clearer and more instructive. Thus, the diet functions as an important means of altering consciousness during the shaman's initiation .

Some of these dietary restrictions are difficult to explain and, maybe, are best understood when examined alongside other taboo behaviors related to sex and food, that can be observed on numerous social occasions. An example is the case of the Shuar Indians - popularly known as "jivaros" – who fast and abstain from sex during the period that they prepare the poison for their arrows.

It is considered essential that the rules governing diet and sexual behavior be followed by the "vegetalistas" and their clients (patients?) when they take the brew. The latter are told that if they disobey the rules the effects of the plants will grow weaker and end up disappearing altogether. Furthermore, certain "teacher" plants, believed to be very "jealous," are likely to punish those who disrespect them with illnesses and even death.

The existence of taboos involving the use of medicines - even those belonging to the official pharmacopoeia - is very widespread throughout the whole Amazon region. Raimundo H. Maues, a Brazilian anthropologist who studied a fishing community on the mouth the Amazon observed that upon prescribing medicine, the popular medical practitioner is also expected to prescribe special dietary and behaviorial observances that must be followed by the patient during the period in which he is taking the medicine. Adherence to such rules assure the medicine’s efficiency and prevents the "poison that kills the

illness" from harming the patient. Such taboos seem to play an important part in the healing process for Maues refers to frequent complaints about doctors not advising their patients to abstain from certain foods or activities while taking prescribed medications (11).

This concept might be related to the idea that certain foods are not to be eaten together. A deeper understanding of the question requires an approach which goes beyond mere physiological considerations, and takes into account the meanings attributed to the taboos of the region's cultural system.

Teacher Plants and Ayahuasca

Although psychoactive substances have been used - at different times and in different regions of the world - for a wide variety of reasons, its two greatest uses have been as a means of healing and as a way of making contact with divine forces. Indian sacred texts and Homer's epic poems, for instance, report the use of plants and other natural substances that provoked states of altered consciousness. Even in the lonely wastelands of Siberia, hallucinogenic mushrooms were traditionally used for shamanic purposes.

However, it is in the Americas that the greatest concentration of these substances is to be found, and where, to this day, they are most frequently used. In this part of the world, their use has been traditionally regarded as sacred rather than recreational, and as a means of validating or reifying culture as opposed to a temporary way of escaping it. In fact, for their most important religious and cultural events, most of the Indian tribes of the Amazon basin, as well as those on the Orinoco, use preparations made from one or more psychotropic.

Of all these plants, the one most frequently employed is the "Banisteriopsis", of which the "caapi", "quitensis" and "inebrians" varieties are used to prepare ayahuasca. The recipes for this brew vary and many groups add different herbs , depending on their traditions and on the the desire end result. Usually, they include the "Diploterys cabrerana", the "Psychotria catharginensis", or more commonly, the "Psychotria viridis", which are believed to reinforce and sustain the visions (12).

Besides using them for their medicinal effects, Amazon Indians take ayahuasca to reach the "real world", the world of the spirits from where all knowledge comes. The "vegetalistas" see the plant as a "doctor"; an intelligent being endowed with a strong spirit, with whom it is possible to establish relations. They believe that much can be learned from ayahuasca if the rules are followed correctly.

"Ayahusca" is thought to belong to the class of plants that have "mothers" or protecting spirits – a notion that is common among many of the region’s Indian groups.

"Doctor" or" teacher plants" are believed to:

1. Produce an altered state of consciousness.
2. Alter the effects of ayahuasca when they are cooked together.
3. Produce dizziness.
4. Have strong emetic or cathartic qualities.
5. Provoke particularly clear visions.

It is said that ayahuasca brings knowledge about fauna and flora and helps one to memorize this knowledge. Like other teacher plants, ayahuasca is said to teach songs, both in different Indian languages and in Spanish. It even helps to each the languages themselves. Furthermore, it is thought to increase artistic and intellectual abilities in those who take it. Some "vegetalistas" claim to have learned many long prayers from the teacher plants (13).

There are approximately fifty plants that may be added to ayahuasca, either by Indian or by mestizo healers. The "vegetalistas" who want to know the effects of certain plants, add them to the mixture when preparing ayahuasca, and then learn from the alterations they provoke and the visions and dreams they bring on.

Interpreting these experiences leads shamans to understand the plants’ properties and applications. Thus, certain plants are thought to give the shaman the power "to see", "to voyage", "to heal", "to harm" or to become stronger. This is also how shamans learn which plants may be used together because "they know each other", and which "do not go well together" (14).

The Amazonian Spirit World

A large majority of the Amazonian population that uses ayahuasca continues to live in small riverside villages surrounded by nature. Even de Rios' and Luna's informers, who live in cities such as Iquitos and Pucallpa, still maintain links with rural life or tend small gardens. Many spend time in the fields as well as in town, while others are recent arrivals to urban areas.

Similar social conditions may be found in the Brazilian Amazon where a considerable portion of the population of both small agricultural communities' and towns like Rio Branco, in Acre, is comprised of ex-rubber-tappers, who were thrown out of their forest "colocações" (holdings) by the social changes that have affected the region since the turn of the century (15). These people continue in their ancient beliefs - of Indian origin – that concern the spiritual beings thought to inhabit the forest, water and air. Such notions – whose origins can be traced from the fusion of various Indian groups' cosmologies with European belief systems such as Catholicism, Spiritualism, and Esoterism, and African religions - often give the impression of an incoherent jumble made up of fragments of various systems. But this diversity coupled with its arrangement as a composite (?) can be best understood as a reflection of the brutal changes that have been occurring in this region, changes that involve the incorporation of new populations along with their diverse social and economic systems, technology and religious ideals.

In the same way that the Amazonian "caboclo" finds himself at the mercy of social powers that he can hardly understand, so he conceives of his life as being influenced, for better of for worse, by supernatural beings. Such beings come in many guises ranging from animals, Indian, mestizo and black shamans, foreign white business executives, and rubber-tappers to European fairy-tale princesses, angels, army officers, famous doctors, and even extra-terrestrials(16).

Although they may be known by different names on the each side of the Peruvian/Brazilian border, these beings are take similar forms: as mermaids that live "in enchanted realms" at the bottom of the rivers, giant snakes, "currupiras", "anhangás", or monsters. Each animal species is also endowed with its "mother"; a protective spiritual being capable of giving out punishments such as the loss of one's

shadow for hunters who kill animals needlessly or disproportionately. Certain rivers, igarapés, wells and even ports where canoes are anchored are also considered to have mothers.

To avoid the wrath of these "mothers", the "caboclo" takes a series of precautions to avoid annoying them. These beings often appear in forms whose origins blend Indian spirits that "own" certain places or animals with European legendary figures such as fairies, mermaids, enchanted Moorish girls and the infinite versions of the Virgin (17). They are similar to the "mothers" that the Peruvian mestizo shamans attribute to certain plants. To the Amazonian "caboclo" supernatural beings such as werewolves and "matintapereras" - that are part human and part animal - may even be found in urban areas, though usually in smaller numbers.

In spite of these beliefs, Amazonian "caboclos" and mestizos generally consider themselves Catholic, although, of late, other religious systems such as Protestantism and Spiritualism have also been attracting large followings. Furthermore, on the Brazilian side, particularly in urban centers where there are noticeably large black populations, the influence of African religions is quiet strong. However, on the whole, Amazonian religiosity manifests itself mainly in the cult of the saints - or rather their images - which are often considered to have divine powers and to be able to perform miracles (18).

The cult of saints is a collective manifestation and each village has its own calendar for the various ceremonies and celebrations. In small farms and villages, the main building is usually the chapel. Adjoining it is often a "ramada", a shed built for the festivities that invariably follow the main religious celebrations. Sometimes chapel and "ramada" are both part of the same building or even the same room. In this case, the altar is separated from the area where the dancing takes place by a curtain which is kept open during the prayers and is closed on more profane occasions.

The saints are seen as benevolent domestic entities who are responsible for general well-being, healing, abundant crops, and the success of many other activities undertaken by their followers. The focal point in the man-saint relationship is the "vow", by which the caboclo promises to pray and carry out saint-glorifying activities to in return for having certain wishes granted. There is little elaboration on the nature of life after death, although there is a certainty that all will be well as long as one respects the saints and keeps one's vows to them (19).

Although powerful, the saints are thought to be impotent against "bichos visagentos" (monsters that are normally relatively harmless nature spirits until they are disrespected and become aggressive). The saints are considered to be benevolent beings, closer to man than to nature. Therefore, the way of dealing with these two different types of spiritual beings must also differ. While saints are invoked through prayers, vows and celebrations, the "bichos visagentos" are avoided or sent away through certain magical practices and special prayers that are regarded more as magical spells than as means of communication with divine spirits,.

The belief in these two types of spiritual beings does not lead to different religious orders. Neither does it give rise to different religious categories: (?) religion and popular superstition . In the "caboclo" mind, both are part of this religion whose cosmology includes both saints and "bichos visagentos". To deal with one or the other, the caboclo uses specific techniques that make up the "science" with which the "caboclo" tries to control his environment (20).

Amazonian villages are usually isolated, distant from urban centers, and far removed from technological innovations and state influence. Social life tends to be structured around religious brotherhoods that often transcend their spiritual functions and become involved in more temporal matters .

The leaders of these brotherhoods - usually the most prestigious local inhabitants - end up presenting themselves and functioning as local authorities. In recent times, the abrupt social and economical transformations taking place in the Amazon region have tended to reduce this isolation. Villages become urban and semi-urban centers and the old egalitarianism which prevailed when all were small farmers or rubber-tappers tends to break down. The brotherhoods lose their cohesion and under the tutelage of the resident parish priest or resident vicar they become mere appendages of the official church,. The "novenas", or series of prayer sessions held at certain times of the year, become distinct from the festivities and dances and reveal the increasing division between sacred and profane categories. Even the cult of saints ends up exposing class and color prejudices, rendering more apparent the process of social differentiation.

Changes also occur in the belief system, especially in relation to non-Catholic

spiritual beings that the “caboclo” now longer sees as dominating his habitat. Instead they are demoted to the status of mere superstitions amongst town dwellers.

The "vegetalistas" from the Peruvian Amazon that were studied by Luna are also deeply influenced by both urbanization and Christianity. But the importance of the Christian element in ayahuasca sessions varies according to the "vegetalista". In spite of all "vegetalistas" agreeing that Jesus is the Supreme Being, and that all evil comes from Satan, the older Peruvian shamans seldom invoke Christian elements, preferring to rely more on Amazonian cosmologies. Other shamans however, invariably begin their sessions by invoking Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Among younger shamans, it is common to hold the sessions around a cross and to say the usual Roman Catholic prayers as well as others taken from the anthology known as " La Santa Cruz de Caravacca". There are also other numerous references to popular Catholicism. Among the younger shamans in particular, there is a great interest in the Order of the Rosy Cross and other branches of European esoterism.

Gifts from the spirits

The shamanic quest is usually conceived of as a voyage or a battle in which the shaman may undergo several ordeals and expose himself to various perils such as attacks from evil spirits or envious vegetalistas. Enemies may take the form of snakes or other dangerous animals or may even appear as magic darts ("virotes"). As such, the vegetalista must always be on guard. One of his main defenses is the "arkana" (from the quechua "arkay", which means: to stop, to block or to close), which is a kind of armor fashioned out of tobacco smoke. His defenses may also come in the shape of animals, birds, angels brandishing swords, soldiers carrying fire arms, and even fighter planes. The shaman may count as well on the aid of the anthropomorphic spirits of teacher plants, mestizo or Indian shamans, famous Western doctors, sages from distant countries, and even extra-terrestrial beings. Sometimes, during a session, the shaman may be possessed by a healing spirit. At other times he may hold conversations with spirits.21

Apart from help of this kind, the vegetalista may also receive certain gifts from the spirits, such as magic songs or "icaros " , "virotes" or the magic pleghm known as "yachay". These comprise the arsenal of his art. He receives them during his initiation, when in isolation and undergoing special diets.

The Icaros

The use of hallucinogens and magical melodies or songs is quite common throughout the Americas and plays a very important part in the ritual usage of peyote, San Pedrito cactus, epena snuff, Santa Rosa herb and tobacco. It is believed that each teacher plant teaches the vegetalista a song or a melody that represents the essence of its power and that may be used by him both for healing and protection and in order to inflict evil upon others. These songs called "icaros"(from the quechua "yakaray", meaning to blow healing smoke) are used in all shamanic activities, with or without psychoactive substances.

They may be used to invoke the spirit of a teacher plant or of a dead shaman, to travel to other worlds, to heal, to hunt, to fish, etc.. Certain "icaros" may be used to focus or alter the visions produced by entheogens, and may increase or diminish their intensity, change the perception of colors, affect their emotional content, etc..

In this way the icaros play an important part in the production of visions. Their special qualities can only be perceived during the rituals. Their words are often poetic and evocative and the melodies are carried by songs, whistles, or by a combination of both. It is said that expert vegetalistas are able to use icaros to produce collective visions experienced by all those taking part in the session. Furthermore, the ability to produce beautiful and lasting visions is considered to an important way of judging the sharman's ability. In some cases this may lead to demonstrations of rivalry during a session in which several vegetalistas are present and they simultaneously try to influence the visions being produced.

Luna reports never having heard two people sing exactly the same icaro, and, in fact, when several vegetalistas are present at the same ceremony, they often sing their individual icaros simultaneously, producing a very suggestive effect that intensifies their emotional state and has an effect on the visions produced.

Even in the absence of ayahuasca or other psychoactive substances, the icaros provoke a trance. Luna says that although one of his informants only took ayahuasca once a week, he held three or four healing

sessions during this period. On such occasions he went into a trance simply by singing his icaro and smoking a few "mapacho" cigarettes made from a local variety of wild tobacco used frequently by local shamans . Since he barely inhaled any smoke, the trance could not be attributed to the tobacco. More likely, it was self-induced through concentration and through the whistling of the icaros.

Icaros are believed to be important for healing and protection. Apart from their inherent healing powers - for instance, on snake bites - they are also considered powerful weapons in battles against evil sorcerers who may be the source of someone's illness. In such a case, if the healer's icaro is not stronger than his adversary's he may even run the risk of being killed.

The social and economic conditions of the Amazon lead to great instability in the emotional life of its inhabitants. As a result, the separation of couples and the break-up of families are very common occurrences. In such instances, one of the shaman's main functions is to resolve emotional conflicts, for which herbal baths and icaros – often used as love charms - are considered highly effective. As such, a vegetalista's repertoire of icaros is one of his main sources of power and determines his position in the shamans' prestigious hierarchy. Usually, the more icaros a shaman has, the greater the respect he inspires.23

The magic phlegm and the "virotes"

Although of great importance, the two other basic instruments of the vegetalista will be dealt with more briefly here since they do not play any part in the Santo Daime tradition that constitutes our main subject. It is enough to say that all the vegetalistas studied by Luna claimed to carry in their chests a kind of phlegm given to them by the spirits known as "yachay" "yausa" or "mariri". This substance supposedly acts as a magnet in extracting harmful virotes and other dangerous magical objects used by evil sorcerers from people's bodies. The shaman usually regurgitates the phlegm and uses it in sucking the parts of his clients' bodies in which the objects causing their ills are supposedly lodged. After sucking, he releases the extracted object from his yachay and spits it out somewhere outside the house.

The virotes are also seen as gifts from the spirits and are described as a kind of phlegm that shamans of evil intent keep in their yachay in order to shoot from their mouths and strike their victims. The virotes may then take on various shapes, turning into darts, bones, thorns, blades, insects, etc..

Yachay and virotes have a common characteristic: they tend to return to those who sent them. Living beings thay obey the vegetalista's command, they may be placed in the general category of auxiliary spirits.23

As for the existence of good and evil vegetalistas, it must be remembered that in magic it is difficult to make a clear distinction between these categories. As the vegetalistas often point out, during their initiation the plant spirits offer them gifts of different kinds: icaros with assorted powers, perfumes for love potions, yachay, virotes, snakes and other animals to be used in attack and defense, etc.. It is up to the neophyte to choose the gifts he will accept. It is said to be easier to become an evil sorcerer than a healer since the spirits begin by offering gifts that cause evil. If the initiate is weak and accepts them, he will become an evil sorcerer. Only later do the spirits come with gifts he can use for healing or love potions.

It is worth noting that, where the Christian influence is weaker, the distinction between evil and good vegetalistas becomes blurred. It is in such case that the individual's personality and decisions come into play. The temptation of evil seems to be constant, and the greater the powers and knowledge already acquired, the greater the possibilities of using them incorrectly. Certain habits such as drinking may also lead to evil. Thus a vegetalista, even after a long career as a practitioner of good deeds, may end up becoming an evil sorcerer.

Notes

1. Luna 1986: 30.
2. Dobkin de Rios 1972:45
3. Luna1986:33
4. Luna1986: 34.
5. Eliade 1982: 105.
6. Luna 1986: 43.

7. McKenna, Luna and Towers 1986:80.

8. Eliade: 1982: 43.

9. Luna 1986: 160.

10. Luna 1986: 52.

11. Maués 1990: 205.

12. Chemical analysis shows that Bannisteriopsis caapi contains the beta-carboline alkaloids: harmine, harmaline and tetrahydroharmine. Diploteys cabreana and the Psychotrias have the hallucinogenic alkaloid N-dimetiltriptamine (DMT). This substance, when taken alone and orally, is inactive, even in high doses, owing to the action of the monoamine oxidase (MAO). Analysis has shown that, although the beta-carbolines found in the mixtures are in too low a dosage to manifest their hallucinogenic properties, they seem to play a role in the inhibition of MAO, thus freeing the DMT from its action and allowing it to show its psychoactive properties. This process is explained phenomenologically by the users of the brew who say that the vine (Banisteriopsis) carries the "force" while the leaf (Psychotria) brings the "light". Things become less clear when one takes into consideration certain claims that the Banisteriopsismay reveal hallucinogenic properties when brewed alone, or when smoked or chewed. Apart from their psychoactive effects, the components of ayahuasca have a large range of emetic , antimicrobial and anti-helmintic effects, which make them effective in the fight against ascarid worms, as well as protozoaries such as tripanossomes and amoebas. This would explain the use of the brew as an emetic and as a laxative, to cleanse the organism of all impurities. The brew is also said to be useful against malaria (Luna 1986: 57-59).

13. Luna 1986:62-64

14. McKenna, Luna and Towers 1986: 78.

15. Monteiro da Silva 1983:23 and 41.

16 Luna 1986:73

17. Galvão 1983: 8.

18. Galvão 1983: 4.

19. Galvão 1983: 4 and 5.

20. Galvão 1983: 6.

21. Luna 1986:94.

22. Luna 1986; 97-109.

23. Luna 1986; 110 and 113.

Chapter 2

Caboclo Conceptions of Illness and the Use of Ayahuasca

In many parts of the world where magical views on health and illness predominate, the questions asked when someone is taken ill are different from those asked by western medicine. While the latter concentrates on *how* a disease may occur, magical thinking is more concerned with *why* someone might be struck by a given illness. It should be noted that in this mode of thought, the concept of "illness" covers a wide range of problems which, apart from diseases, also includes psychological distress and an assortment of social and family difficulties.

Within this framework, the vegetalistas develop their conceptions on the causes of illnesses and the possibilities of healing, in a way which seems to be quite widespread throughout the Amazon region1. The problems they have to deal with are classified according to two basic categories:

1 Illnesses which are natural or sent by God. These are usually simple ills like colds, sore throats, skin problems, etc., which can be easily treated with medicines available from chemists, often as injections (preferably painful ones).

2 Magical illnesses. When a natural illness does not respond to the standard methods of Western medicine, then there is a suspicion that it may have supernatural causes. These suspicions may increase if sudden pains occur is specific parts of the body. It is then that a vegetalista must be resorted to. These magical illnesses are thought to be caused by ill wishers, moved by anger or envy, and who may resort to virotes, to soul stealing or other types of witchcraft.

This type of illness may even be brought about by spiritual beings, once their world is thought to be full of danger and basically hostile to man. According to Luna, however, due to the changes occurring in the habitat and due to urbanization, it is more common, nowadays, to attribute these illnesses to other humans, who are thought to act directly or to resort to sorcerers.

One of the vegetalista's main tasks is to determine the cause of an illness that may be afflicting a client. He must ascertain if it has a natural or a magical origin. Should it be the latter, then he must first discover the cause and then develop a appropriate treatment.

In order to accomplish this, he will usually begin by inquiring about the patient's symptoms , about his love life and his financial concerns. He may then examine the client's body and take his pulse. Sometimes this may be enough for the vegetalista to diagnose the illness and prescribe treatment. In other cases, he may have to resort to ayahuasca, which he may either take alone or sharer with the patient. There may then be visions, often of a highly colored and emotionally charged nature, where it is common to find both familiar and unfamiliar human or animal figures and, sometimes, even the patient himself. There are accounts of episodes involving autoscopy, consisting of journeys into the body and an examination of its workings. Other varied bodily phenomena may also occur, such

trembling, feelings of cold, nausea, vomit ,diarrhea, and, sometimes, even the sensation of death.

Such experiences and the interpretation offered by the vegetalista tend to have a great impact, and may lead the client to reconsider his life as a whole and the various tensions to which he is subject. This may frequently lead to the root of his ills. He may attribute them to the evil influence of someone he may see in his visions. In this case, the shaman must then enter into spiritual combat to revert this condition, and the client may derive comfort from the notion that evil spells tend to return to their senders, thus satisfying his sense of justice and of cosmic order.

On the other hand, illness is usually considered to be caused by a state of impurity in the individual, and is considered to be a "cochinada" (filth) that takes over his organism. It is believed that the accumulation of impurities is due to disobedience

of the dietary rules and other forms of prescribed conduct. Thus, the efficacy of ayahuasca and other plants that may be resorted to in such cases is credited to a large extent to their emetic/cathartic properties that produce sensations of cleansing and relief.

Treatments prescribed by vegetalistas are renowned for their power and for the way they shake the patients. So, the clients, when going for a consultation , usually take someone from their close personal circle to accompany them, so as to provide them with a sense of security and to help them on their way home. This ends up by giving the vegetalistas' work a touch of family therapy.

The vegetalistas are among the most prestigious options of treatment available to the impoverished masses of the region.3. This is understandable , once the local representatives of official medicine tend to

be ill prepared and indifferent , if not prejudiced, with regard to this population. The vegetalistas, on the other hand, are not only closer to their public in cultural and economical terms, but they also offer a more personalized service. They are able to produce profound psychological effects using methods which are easy to understand since they are based on a series of beliefs which are shared by the local caboclo population. Thus they are more accessible and are, in many cases considered to be more effective than the practitioners of official medicine.

Ayahuasca Sessions

There is no single correct way to organize ayahuasca sessions, although there is always an effort to create an atmosphere of enchantment appropriate to the handling of sacred substances and to prepare spirits for transcendental experiences.

Sessions may occur either in a more urban environment or in parts of the forest which may be relatively difficult to reach for urban dwellers. In urban areas, they usually take place indoors, where away from too much noise which may disturb those whose sensitivity is magnified by the use of the beverage.. It is also necessary to keep a minimum of discretion with regard to neighbors and to the authorities, since although the use of ayahuasca may be permitted in Peru, there are laws against "quackery ". These sessions are usually held by professional or semi-professional vegetalistas, who may hold them several times a week or even daily. They bring together groups of up to twenty people, who are often strangers to each other and are not even introduced at the beginning of the session.

Sometimes these vegetalistas may decide to take smaller groups to a nearby forest and hold ayahuasca sessions outdoors, usually in moonless nights. On such occasions the sessions lose a little of their ritualistic rigidity and take on a more informal atmosphere. . Luna also calls attention to the differences between sessions held by vegetalistas from cities like Iquitos or Pucalpa and those from less urbanized areas , where there may be fewer Christian elements. But , as he himself points out this may be too rough a generalization, since vegetalistas move around a lot and belong to wide social networks that bring

together urban and rural vegetalistas. He also points out that there is a great tolerance and even a curiosity about different ways of holding these rituals.

The sessions, called "works", do not necessarily have to be dedicated to healing. It is common for vegetalistas to get together a few times a month, in order to take ayahuasca together, and to learn from their visions, and renew their spiritual powers.

The ritual may be considered to begin with the preparation of the beverage. In some cases , the ayahuasqueros already acquire it made, but they usually like to prepare it themselves, using plants they themselves collect from the forest or grow in their own gardens in small landholdings known as "chacras". Luna describes a session where the vegetalista begins at dawn of the day previous to the preparation and ceremoniously collects the vine. After cutting it into pieces of between thirty and forty centimeters length, he ties them in bundles of about thirty pieces each. He then places them in a shady spot and covers them with leaves in order to protect them. He then collects the chacruna (Psychotria viridis) leaves.

The brew is prepared in a place especially set aside for this purpose and, in the case described by Luna, the process is then carried out by a woman and her brother. The preparation begins at six o'clock in the morning, when the pieces of vine are crushed with the help of a stone or a piece of hard wood. The vine fibers and the leaves are placed in a large pan in alternate layers. Ideally the pan should be made of ceramics , but as aluminum pans are more easily accessible, they are also more commonly used. For every layer he arranges , the vegetalista will blow tobacco smoke in the pan. He then pours between twelve and fifteen liters of fresh water over the layers and lets it boil till the liquid is reduced to a liter. This is then poured into another pan and the operation is repeated seven more times. The extract that is collected is then boiled again , till it is reduced to half a litre and the final product is a thick ochre liquid.

The session or "work" begins at about nine o'clock in the evening, although those taking part may arrive several hours beforehand. The group may be made up of:

- patients who may or may not take the beverage;
- healthy people who may want "cleansing" or who simply want to have visions;
- people accompanying patients or who are simply curious. These keep to their places and take little part in the session.

All those taking ayahuasca must abstain from alcohol, spicy food, salt, fat, and certain types of meat, for a period of at least 24 hours before the session and this diet should be kept for another 24 following the session.

The session is conducted by the vegetalista who may be assisted by his wife. For a few hours he may talk about a variety of subjects of both sacred and profane nature; he may tell stories, some of which may even be slightly lewd; and he may asked about absent friends or relatives of those present. This talk is considered to be important to prepare those taking part for the experiences they are about to have.

When the ayahuasquero finally decides it is time to begin, all those taking part make themselves comfortable, sitting in a circle around him as a means of protection against the forces of evil that may come during the session.

In one of the ceremonies Luna describes, the vegetalista sits in front of his "schacapa", a rattle used to accompany the icaros and, occasionally shaken over the head or the body of those taking part, in order to bring them visions or to protect them from illnesses or from evil spirits. Besides him he has a bottle of ayahuasca, another with camphor crystals steeped in alcohol, several cigarettes of "mapacho" tobacco, to be smoked during the ritual, a small bottle of perfume to calm those that might be frightened, and for those who might feel sick; toilet paper and a torch. Sometimes there may also be photographs or pieces of paper with the names and addresses of people who are to be helped in their absence. Neither the vegetalista nor any of those present uses any kind of special costume. Occasionally there may also be some clearly Christian symbols, like the cross or pictures of saints.

The ceremony begins with a series of prayers. One of the most common, begins by invoking "Christ, the Celestial Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth", and begs permission to use the plant and asks for protection against evil spirits who may wish to enter the circle. The prayer ends as follows:

"Father, in this Thy circle there is no envy, revenge, witchcraft, nothing of evil. All is in accordance with Thy laws. We heal the ill, to the best of our abilities. We obey Thy commands, Oh Father."

Several other prayers may also be said, such as the Roman Catholic Creed, and invocations of the Virgin. Much use is also made of a book called "The Holy Cross of Caravacca-A Treasury of Prayers". This collection is very popular in Latin America and Spain. It is often used in magic rituals, and was originally

published in Valencia, Spain, during the 19th century. It has a series of prayers invoking the Cross of Caravacca, a double-armed cross which certain legends relate to the visit of Saint Helen to the Holy Land, in the year 326. Other accounts link it to the miraculous conversion of a Moslem king during the Moorish occupation of Spain.

The ayahuasquero then takes the bottle with the brew, blows tobacco smoke over it and invokes the spirit of ayahuasca, asking it to send visions to those present. He may request that someone see his future, or who is responsible for his illness, or , even, that there may be a vision of a bird such as the humming bird, or that a patient may have a vision of the underground, and see how a tree absorbs nourishment and strength through its roots.5

The beverage is served in a small gourd. Not everyone present drinks it, and some , like women or first timers, are given less. Before drinking, they may blow a little smoke over the gourd and say a quick prayer. Once they have all been served, the vegetalista takes his own dose and has the lights extinguished, except for a candle by the altar.

There follow between twenty and thirty minutes of silence until the vegetalista feels the arrival of the "mareacion" (the name given to the effects of the drink and which in Spanish means dizziness or nausea). He then begins to play the rattle and to whistle or sing icaros to increase the effect. Occasionally, he may ask someone if he is "mareado" or he may blow smoke. The ill receive special attention, and the shaman may eventually suck certain parts of their bodies, producing a thorn or some other evil object which is supposed to have been lodged in their bodies, causing the harm. The others keep silent, absorbed in their visions. Occasionally someone may leave to vomit or defecate. The effect of the drink seems to come in waves. Every forty or sixty minutes there seems to be an interval when the icaros stop and the participants start making comments or even telling jokes about their visions. After a period of time, the effects return and everyone is silent again. If other vegetalistas are present they might play their rattles or sing their icaros at any moment with no kind of coordination. The words of the songs may be in different languages: Spanish, Aymara or Quechua.

After about four or five hours, the effects of the drink begin to diminish. Even if the participants began the session as strangers, there is now a pervading sense of friendship and warmth. Little by little, people

begin to chat and to talk about the session. Finally, some go home while others may stay on, smoking and talking until they fall asleep.

Ayahuasca is also called "the purge" and taking it is thought to be a way of putting away all illnesses, negative moods, and other sources of problems and

misfortune. The generalized trust in it prophylactic powers and the experience of its strongly emetic and cathartic effects, no doubt contribute to a feeling of cleansing and to the generalized atmosphere of joy and relaxation that reigns after the sessions.

One of the criteria used to judge an ayahuasquero is by the strength of the brew prepared by him. Apart from "cleansing" through vomiting and diarrhea, it should also produce clear and positive visions. Many people go to ayahuasqueros, specifically in search of such visions; sometimes of distant relatives or friends, other times to find out who is responsible for a particular misfortune. There are frequent accounts of strongly erotic visions involving naked women, mermaids, etc.. But sexual activity before, during or immediately after are strictly tabooed, under the allegation that otherwise the brew may cause great harm. A good ayahuasquero must also be able to control the visions of others, ensuring that everyone has his questions answered, and avoiding the more unpleasant experiences. In order to do this he can fall back on several different resources, such as the use of different types of ayahuasca, each of which may have different uses, the singing of certain icaros, the use of rattles or of perfume.

A shamanic session must above all reach a good degree of concentration, so that the visions may be clear. It is also considered important that there be a feeling of harmony among those taking part and the icaros , when sung by several people are thought to reinforce the collective visions, "juntando las mareaciones". Thus, in search of this atmosphere of harmony, tranquillity and assurance, groups of vegetalistas often come together to renew their strength. It is also considered to be dangerous to take the beverage in the company of strangers, since it is difficult to foresee what their reaction might be under the effect of ayahuasca.

In their visions, the ayahuasqueros seek to explore zones which may be difficult to reach in a state of waking consciousness, as well as other "separate realities", or suprasensitive worlds. When they take the drink they feel that they are breaking the normal physical boundaries and that this gives them access to

other levels of reality. Shamans all over the world, and using various different methods to alter their states of consciousness, report experiences of this kind often including flights and voyages to distant places. These voyages may happen in many different ways, and might involve the shaman adopting animal shapes, or being carried by helping spirits or maybe, even airplanes or flying saucers. The incidents occurring during these voyages may also be very varied. Some may visit underground worlds, inhabited by frightening monsters, others may be taken to distant cities and have the prosaic experience of driving a car or taking an elevator. Sometimes these experiences may be terrifying - they may be attacked or have enormous snakes inter them through their mouths, etc.. On such occasions it is important to have the guidance of someone more experienced with the drink who may remind them of the need to keep calm and not give in to fear. Such unpleasant experiences may be attributed to wrongdoing of the past, such as breaking the prescribed diet, or not fulfilling the required sexual abstinence, for instance. Or they may be attributed to evil spirits, or to lack of care during the making of the brew. One of Luna's informants suggests placing a few tobacco cigarettes amidst the vine roots, in order to avoid such effects.

Besides Bannisteriopsis and Psychotria, many other plants may be used to prepare ayahuasca. There is virtually no limit to them, since ayahuasca is considered to be a means of studying the properties of unknown plants and substances, through the changes their addition may make to the overall experience and to the visionary content.

There are many teacher plants and , according to Luna, in some ways tobacco may even be considered to be more important than ayahuasca, since it acts as a mediator between the vegetalista and the spirits of the plants. One of his informants even says that, without tobacco , one cannot use any plant. Tobacco is considered as a purifier of the body and an enemy of illness. It is also considered to be a fool of the spirits. Learning the use of tobacco is supposed to be one of the most important aspects of shamanic initiation and it is always present in the ayahuasca sessions held by mestizo shamans in Peru.6

The feeling that one understands the cause of an illness or of other problems, may be a powerful relief to tensions, and in many cases may stimulate the individual's own powers of self-healing. As already pointed out, the treatment given by a vegetalista is usually more attentive to the patient's individual requirements than that given by practitioners of official medicine attending the poor. Thus it is

understandable that many should resort to such practitioners, in search of care for their problems. Of these, one of the most common is alcoholism, one of the main social problems of the Amazon.

In order to be effective, the vegetalista must surround himself with an aura of omnipotence and be able to convince his clients that he really is able to visit worlds few have access to and that there he may face and defeat fierce evil beings who are responsible for their ills. In order to create and maintain this aura, the vegetalista often describes his adventures, sparing no praises to his own performance. In some cases, his economic and political successes may be called upon as evidence of his shamanic powers. Dobkin de Rios reports examples of shamans who become quite rich and powerful, such as one who was arrested in Pucalpa for the illegal practice of medicine and who had to be released due to the political manifestations that followed.

A vegetalista may often act as a moral arbiter in a community and attribute the cause of certain common problems to certain types of misconduct and single out individuals as perpetrators of evil deeds and, therefore, as deserving punishment. This may then occur either through counterwitchcraft or through more direct action.

One of the aspects of shamanism that becomes obvious from these accounts is that, although it may keep its traditional Indian roots, mestizo shamanism in the Amazon region is very dynamic and malleable, and has been able to adapt itself admirably to the new conditions brought about by urbanization and by the attacks on Indian culture.

Although few of the old shamans have been able to leave successors with the same degree of knowledge about plants and the forest cosmology, the use of ayahuasca persists. New types of shamans appear, who are less individualistic in their methods and more concerned with the collective aspects of the shamanic experience. Luna and Dobkin de Rios briefly mention a new generation of ayahuasqueros who no longer sing their icaros alone, but are accompanied instead by all those taking part in the sessions, like what happens in the Santo Daime ceremonies.

The decline of the traditional Amazonian knowledge is made up for by the borrowing of elements taken from European, African and even Oriental traditions. Nowadays it is common to find elements of

rosacrucianism, gnosticism, Kardecist spiritism, and umbandism (an Afro-Brazilian religion) interweaving shamanic practices. In the place of the old solitary healers, there are now hierarchical institutionalized religions. And the old notions about forest spirits coexist with modern ecological conceptions.

Notes

1- These conceptions show many similarities with the notions studied by Maues (1990) in a region close to the Amazon Delta.

2- The American doctor Andrew Weil says that the reflex that leads to vomiting has its origin in the part of the brain called medulla oblongata, whose messages are transmitted to the alimentary tract through the vagus nerve - one of the main components of the parasympathetic nervous system. During vomiting, very potent

discharges occur in the vagus nerve, leading to several other physiological effects besides the expulsion of the contents of the stomach. Weil speculates that, in this manner, vomiting may make conscious several unconscious processes and may even help spread the influence of the cortex to the center of the unconscious area of the brain, the medulla. Weil believes that vomiting may have dramatic effects on the individual's conscious experiences, affecting them in three ways:

a. expelling unwanted material;

b. doing away with unpleasant sensations such as headaches and nausea;

c. after the use of psychoactive substances, doing away with undesired emotions which may be the result of anxiety and of the resistance to the effects of the substance. Notable relief may be had from the concentration of these resistances and anxieties under the guise of physical sensations in the stomach and their subsequent expulsion through vomiting (Weil; 1980:8-13). Thus one may understand the positive manner in which ayahuasca users regard vomiting, which is regarded as a means of cleansing and may even be stimulated.

3-Dobkin de Rios 1972:67.

4-Luna 1986:144

5-Luna 1986:147.

6- Luna 1986:159.

7- Dobkin de Rios 1972:135.

Chapter 3

The Development of the Santo Daime Religion

Origins

The South American rain forests occupy an area of approximately 6.5 million square kilometers, with a predominance of plains. They also include the greatest part of the Amazon basin and extends as far as North of the Guianas and reaches the mouth of the Orinoco. In spite of its immensity, the region is extraordinarily homogenous , due to its climate and its location on the Equator Writing on man's adaptation to the Amazonian ecology, anthropologist Betty Meggers comments that one of the most surprising characteristics of life in the Amazon of today is the absence of great regional differences. She points out that along all the main rivers and some of their smaller tributaries, the people eat the same food, wear similar clothes, live in the same type of house and share the same beliefs and aspirations.

Many other researchers have made similar comments about the habits and beliefs of contemporary Amazonian Caboclos. The Brazilian anthropologist, Eduardo Galvão, attributes it to the influence of settlers and missionaries who, in the beginning of the XVII century, broke up the Indian societies and imposed Catholicism on them by incorporating them into missionary villages.

Although the Indian influence certainly marked the development of these new values and conceptions with many traits of their own, the basic nature of the Catholic institutions prevailed partially because in the native cultures the relatively simple ritual complex was not able to stem the new practices.

The old beliefs that were best able to survive were those most closely connected to the environment and which had no equivalent in the Christian religion. The spread of a "general language", a variant on the Indian tupy-guarany also played an important part in the leveling of the different forms of expression. According to Galvão, this even led to a tendency to attribute an exaggerated importance to the Indian contribution to the "Caboclo" culture, in a region exposed to several other strong influences.2

The anthropologist Clodomir Monteiro da Silva, on discussing more specifically the Western Amazon, calls attention to moments of great social effervescence which occurred during periods of intense migration both within the region and, on a more national scale, involving the absorption of outside social groups.

Initially, the region was colonized and settled by waves of destitute people from drought striken areas who came to work in the rubber plantations. The economic depression of the 20's and 30's stopped this flow. The loss of importance of the Amazonian rubber due to the competition from the rubber plantations in Malasia, brought on a substantial drop in the population of the area. A new migration flow started in 1940, when the Second World War made Amazonian rubber important to the West again.

The social-economic changes also unleashed a strong process of urbanization, begun by those who had managed to accumulate some savings and moved to big cities in search of a more comfortable life. These were followed by the rural masses of "caboclos" and by the migrants who had come from Northeastern Brazil in 40's, and their descendants, who frustrated in their hopes for a better life then moved to the towns, big or small. After a period of time, on realizing that there, too, they could not attain their goal, they would start a new movement towards the bigger cities, and local capitals. In the past decades this urbanizing process was speeded up, worsening living conditions in these large towns, and leading to the growth of ever more shanty-towns...

The military regime, which came to power in 1964, had as one of its main priorities the "integration of the national territory" and the complete insertion of the Brazilian Amazon into world economy. The resulting social-economic changes, however, also implied in the disruption of the primitive populations and in changes in the urban order. These social and cultural changes lead to a series of new developments like the growth of the Santo Daime religion around the ritual use of "ayahuasca".

Mestre Irineu

The "Santo Daime" followers consider 1930 as the year their doctrine was founded. That was when Raimundo Irineu Serra, a corporal in the Territorial Guard opened his ayahuasca works to the public in Rio Branco, the capital of the then Territory of Acre, in northwestern Brazil. Previously, he had undergone a long period of initiation, and after he had spent many years in touch with the users of "ayahuasca" in the frontier region between Brazil, Peru and Bolivia..

Described as being Black, and very tall and strong, he was born on December the 15th, in São Vicente do Ferré, Maranhão, in 1892 and died on July the 6th, 1971, in Rio Branco. In 1912 he migrated to the Western Amazon, along with a group of people attracted by the dream of making an easy fortune as rubber tappers.

At first, he settled down in Xapuri, where he lived for two years, and then went on to Brasiléa, where he worked for three years, in the rubber plantations and then to Sena Madureira, for another three years. During this period he also worked as a civil servant for the Border Commission, created by the federal government to map the Acre frontier with Bolivia and Peru.

In the years spent working in the Amazon forest he acquired a deep understanding of the local "caboclo" population and its culture. He also contacted the Caxinawá Indian groups, living both in Brazil and Peru and already undergoing a rapid process of assimilation of the dominant cultural values of both these countries(4).

During a certain period he had, as companions, two brothers, Antonio and André Costa, Black friends who were also from São Vicente do Ferré. With them he first came across the use of "ayahuasca", in the Cobija region, in Bolivia. Reports collected by anthropologists Clodomir Monteiro da Silva and Fernando de la Roque Couto, suggest that it was a Peruvian "ayahuasquero", known as Don Crescêncio Pizango, who first introduced the beverage to Antonio Costa. His knowledge of it was attributed to an Inca king, by the name of Huascar, Antonio Costa introduced the ayahuasquero and his brew to Raimundo Irineu Serra.

Although there is little reliable information on the subject, there are indications that, based on their experience, the Costa brothers opened up a religious center in the 20's, called "Círculo de

Regeneração e Fé" (CRF) (Center for Regeneration and Faith) in the town of Brasiléia, Acre. Raimundo Irineu Serra also belonged to this group.

The organization of this center, considered today to have been a forerunner of the Daime, obeyed a hierarchy based on military ranks which went from "soldier" to "marshal". For a certain period there seems to have been a dispute between Antonio Costa and Raimundo Irineu Serra for its effective leadership.

Reports on this period are few and have acquired a certain air of founding myths. This might put in question their reliability, were it not for the fact that they fit in with many local traditions generally associated to the use of the brew. Mestre Irineu seems to have submitted himself initially to the usual processes of initiation and shamanic development already described here for "ayahuasqueros" and "vegetalistas", in the Amazon.

His first experiences are supposed to have included the vision of distant places, like his native Maranhão and the city of Belém do Pará. But the most important vision was the repeated apparition of a female spiritual being called Clara, that later became identified as Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of Conception) and was also known as with the "Queen of the Forest". During these apparitions she is presumed to have given him instructions about a diet he should follow, in order to prepare himself to receive a special mission and become a great healer.

Obeying these recommendations, Raimundo Irineu Serra went to the forest, where he spent eight days, drinking "ayahuasca", and avoiding speaking to anyone, specially women who he had been instructed neither to see nor think about . During this period he also had to restrict himself to eating nothing but manioc root, devoid both of salt and sugar. An incident about this period is frequently told involving of his companions, sometimes identified as Antonio Costa, who had thought of adding salt to the "macacheira" (manioc root) and only refrained himself at the last minute. Mestre Irineu was not around at the time, but was warned by a voice of his companion's intentions and later told him about it, and, in great surprise, his friend confirmed the premonition and recognized this as a sign of his spiritual development.

There is another episode which is frequently told about his initiation, when he had a the vision of the moon coming close to him, having at its center an eagle. It was Our Lady of the Conception or the Queen of the Forest coming to deliver her "teachings" to him.

This "miração" or vision was of great importance in his later work becoming the theme of his first hymn besides providing the Daime religion with one of its most important symbols , where the moon represents the idea that this doctrine was taught by the Virgin Mary and the eagle points to the powerful vision awarded to the followers of the new doctrine.

So, Mestre Irineu like many "vegetalistas" of the region, is shown spending some time alone in the forest, following a severe diet, and then receiving important lessons directly from the "teacher plant" or from the spirit associated to it. The name "Mestre", which was conferred to him, also seems to point towards the Vegetalista tradition, whose most distinguished members are often given that title.

After a period of active participation in the "Círculo de Regeneração e Fé - CRF", and many quarrels with Antonio Costa over its leadership, Mestre Irineu first moved to Sena Madureira and, later, in 1920, to the town of Rio Branco, where he joined the Forest Guards. He remained in this force till 1932 ,when he left, having reached the rank of corporal.

In 1930, while living in the, then, rural district of Vila Ivonete; he began to hold ayahuasca works for the general public, calling it by the name "Daime" which he claimed to have received from the Virgin. He became quite well-known in the local Black community, drawing from there the bulk of his following. With the passing of time, his doctrine started consolidating itself and his "works" attracted people of other racial groups. Eventually his healing powers became so well-known in the region that even members of the local ruling elite became interested in him.

There was in force at this time, an official repressive policy against witchcraft based on a decree of 1890, which was intended to curb illegal medical practice, witchcraft, quackery and the use of "poisonous substances". All these articles could have been used against Mestre Irineu and were, it seems, occasionally used by his enemies to threaten him. But the official combat waged against "centers of witchcraft" was not always systematic and many Afro-Indian spiritual and healing groups managed to

survive, with the support of politically influential friends or clients by having their activities classed as religious and therefore, out of police jurisdiction(6).

The persecution suffered by the different Afro-Indian religious groups, at the hand of the State, although unable to eradicate these belief systems, had a marked effect in molding them both doctrinally and ritually into forms considered to be more compatible with the dominant values of Brazilian society. Certain aspects were encouraged and others discouraged. Rather than end the practice of magic in general, what was sought was the detection and restraint of those dealing in sorcery and evil (7).

So, as long as they kept within certain limits and emphasized their “commitment to goodness” certain religious centers were able to establish profitable relations with members of the political and intellectual elite. These in turn used their connections with these centers for many different purposes. Some resorted to their magical services while others tried to benefit from their prestige among voters. Mestre Irineu also had friends of this kind and enjoyed the support of important local politicians who were glad to be seen at his side especially during election (8). This may help understand the greater importance Mestre Irineu gave to “white” Catholic and esoteric aspects of his doctrine at the expense of the different forms of possession associated to the use of ayahuasca by Amazonian shamans. Similarly one may consider that this is why his doctrine presents none of the moral ambiguity to be found in shamanic and vegetalista traditions, such as magical attacks against enemies, and the preparation of love potions, for example.

Thus, in the 1940's, with the support of Governor Guiomard dos Santos, Mestre Irineu received as a donation the area known as Colônia Custódio de Freitas, a rural area on the outskirts of Rio Branco. The land was then divided among his followers and their families.

The area became known as the "Alto Santo", and a temple was built there which Mestre Irineu named "Centro de Iluminação Cristã Luz Universal" - CICLU. At the entrance he raised a large Cross of Caravacca, 5 meters tall. After a while CICLU became very well known and attracted large numbers of people who came in search of healing and occasionally there were up to six hundred people taking part in the rituals.

The land, informally divided between more than forty families, was worked under a cooperative system known as "mutirão", which was quite common in the region and made it possible to produce enough to feed everybody.

Mestre Irineu's followers regarded him as a benevolent patriarch and in the community's daily life he played alternatively the role of advocate, arbiter and even police officer in the disputes that might arise among them. He thought of himself as a "sheltering tree"; his happy, hospitable temperament attracted visitors from all sides, and he often received as many as 20 to 30 visitors in a day. He is said to have received all who came to him in his characteristic affable and undiscriminating manner. Even when disagreeing with someone, he adopted a friendly and paternal tone.

In this way, he managed to maintain a sense of cooperation and brotherhood among his followers during the last years of his life. The importance of his charismatic personality grew even more evident after his death when the community was split by disputes involving the spiritual leadership, the ownership of the plots of land and individual misunderstandings among its members.

The Holy Doctrines

In the frequent visions he had of the Virgin or the Queen of the Forest, as he called her, she presented him with a series of revelations and lessons. That is how he learned to call the drink "Daime", which in Portuguese also means "give me", and which he claimed referred to the invocations "Dai-me luz", "Dai-me força", "Dai-me amor" (give me light, give me strength, give me love) which were present in the hymns she taught him and which were to become a central characteristic of the new religious doctrine. The "Queen of the Forest" was also said to have awarded him the title of "Chefe Império Juramidam" (Imperial Leader Juramidam), identifying him with Inca spiritual entities, his predecessors in the use of ayahuasca, and with King Huascar. In the same way that the "Queen of the Forest" was identified with the moon, other celestial bodies, the Sun and the stars were also seen as the visible manifestations of other divine beings. The drink itself was associated with the Sun or even with God Himself. According to Vera Fróes, a researcher and daimista leader: "Mestre Irineu's mission is Juramidam's, a divine being a divine that represents Christ, and reveals His doctrines and teachings, through hymns that correspond to the sacred Bible (10).

The hymns are simple words put to music, considered to be "received" by people through channeling - Though he initially received "chamadas" (calls), which were melodies without words, that he whistled; after some time , Mestre Irineu began receiving the hymns that were to compose his "Hinário do Cruzeiro", which is considered to be the basis of the "Santo Daime" doctrine. They speak of Mestre Irineu's visions , featuring "divine beings" from the "celestial court" including a wide range of spirits from the Christian, Indian and African pantheons.

Little is known of Mestre Irineu's spiritual development in the early years following his first experiences with Daime. We know, however, that, in 1931 when he had already parted company with the Costa brothers, he started to organize ayahuasca sessions involving a few other people. These consisted basically of concentration sessions and of talks in which he transmitted the teachings that he received from the Daime . It is also known that his interests in spiritual research led him to join the "Circulo Esotérico da Comunhão do Pensamento" (Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thougth) an organization

whose center was in São Paulo and which had a wide network of correspondents in the area. He had also joined the Rosacrucian Order. These two organizations had a strong influence on his thinking and some of the basic principles of his doctrine, like the motto "Harmony, Love, Truth and Justice" are direct reflections of the teachings of the "Communion of Thought".

Between 1935 and 1940, the new doctrine took on its present characteristics and the "Hymnary of the Cross" (the collection of hymns "received" by Mestre Irineu) took form. Some of his followers also "received" hymns which were also considered to be expressions of the "Holy Doctrines", in so far as they confirmed Mestre Irineu's teachings. They are concerned with healing, discipline, visions and guidance, and reflect certain moments as lived by the community and by certain individuals. They form a vast body, difficult to systematize, in which one distinguishes the tendency to consider the material side of life as secondary, false, while emphasis is placed on the spiritual life and the basic principles of harmony, love, truth and justice. As a whole, they form the ethical basis for the daimistas' daily life.

The system also reproduces a familial ideology , and the words "father", "mother", "son" appear very frequently. The daimistas are seen as making up a brotherhood and a symbolic familial relationship is also extended to the elements of Nature and to spiritual beings of the forest and the rivers, as well as to the Sun, the Moon and the stars.

This relationship also emphasizes the principle of duality manifested in the pairs sun/moon, father/mother, God/Our Lady, man/woman, the "Jagube vine/ the Chacruna leaf (ayahuasca components). Although the Christian Trinity is not ignored, this dualism is the axis around which the main ideas of the Santo Daime doctrine gravitate. So, it is considered that during the sessions an "energy" circulates among the participants, that is of a dual, masculine/feminine polarity, whose power or flux may be affected by the existing balance between male and female members of the group. In accordance with this principle, there is a tendency to stimulate the adoption of traditional gender roles, with an emphasis on the woman's responsibility in household activities like cooking , sewing, and looking after children, while men are expected to do the work that calls for physical strength as well as to occupy most of the decision making and prestigious positions in the community.

The world is conceived of as being under the constant influence of spirits, in different stages of evolution - Besides his body or "apparatus", all human beings are thought to have a "lower" and a "higher self". The first is related to matter and is transitory in nature, although it is important for the development of the other half, the" double". "Astral work" thus consists to a large extent in the progressive discovery of this double and of its true identity through "mirações". Thus, the "double becomes the source of inspiration for the actions of the lower self in the material world. Illnesses, considered to be a sign of transgression of the divine order, provide possibilities of atonement, and opportunities to regain spiritual equilibrium (11).

Daimistas believe that the spiritual world is full of conflicts that spill over to the physical plane where spirits must materialize in order to establish alliances. So, there is a constant interaction between the spiritual and the physical worlds. These two worlds, in spite of belonging to different dimensions, are considered to be indivisible and interdependent (12).

Work in the astral plane is conceived of as a war or a battle against weakness, impurity, doubt or illness. The daimistas are the soldiers or "midam", who alongside Jura (God) make up the Juramidam Empire, a source of strength for the obedient, the humble and the clean of heart. Thus, Juramidam means God or God and his soldiers, a notion of the divine which is both individualistic and collective.

Godfather Sebastião

Organizations such as this one, depending to a great extent on the charisma of a leader, are notoriously unstable at times of succession. So, after Mestre Irineu's death in 1971, his organization was torn apart by a series of disputes that arose among his followers.

Initially, the command of the works passed on to Leôncio Gomes, son of one of Mestre Irineu's closest collaborators, and his last wife's uncle. But, he was unable to maintain the unity of the group, and many decided to leave. In 1974, a group of more than one hundred daimistas left, under the leadership of Sebastião Motta de Mello. From then onwards, though maintaining fidelity to Mestre Irineu's teachings, he held his own sessions, adding little by little, new elements to the original doctrine.

After Leôncio Gomes passed away, the was substituted by Francisco Fernandes Filho (Tetéu) who very soon quarreled with Mestre Irineu's widow, Dona Peregrina, and was chased out of Mestre Irineu's house. Tetéu founded a new center, less than a kilometer away from the original one and claimed for himself the original register of the CICLU. in a dispute that continues to this day.

At this new address, Francisco Fernandes Filho was in turn succeeded by Luiz Mendes and the old center which had been started by Mestre Irineu, and which to this day houses his tomb , held in great veneration by all daimistas, is now run by Peregrina Gomes Serra.

There is in Porto Velho, Rondônia, another church which although politically autonomous, keeps a close link with CICLU. That is the Centro Eclético de Correntes da Luz Universal (CECLU) founded in 1964, by Virgilio Nogueira do Amaral, and which follows the basic lines of the doctrine as taught by Mestre Irineu (Nakamaki, s.d. 6).

Nowadays, the most influential of the daimista organizations , is the Centro Eclético Fluente Luz Universal (CEFLURIS) which was started by Sebastião Motta de Mello who led it up to his death on January 20th ,1990.

Sebastião Motta de Mello, now known as Padrinho (Godfather)Sebastião was born in the state of Amazonas, on October 7th, 1920, in a rubber plantation on the banks of the Juruá river. He began to have visions and to hear voices while he was still a boy and used to say that, before moving to the state of Acre, he had already been there on an "astral voyage". He was initiated into the spiritist tradition of Alain Kardec by a Black man from São Paulo known as Mestre Oswaldo. In this work, which did not involve the use of ayahuasca, Padrinho Sebastião frequently channeled well-known guides of the Kardec line known as Doctor José Bezerra de Menezes and Antonio Jorge, attending to the ill and doing faith healing.

In 1959, he moved with his family to an area on the outskirts of Rio Branco, known as Colonia 5.000 where his wife, Rita Gregório, had relatives. For several years he continued to hold healing sessions and was finally introduced to Daime in 1965, when he went to Mestre Irineu in search of healing for himself. On recovering from the problem with his liver that had been troubling him, he began to attend the works at the Alto Santo group, and soon began to receive hymns and to rise in that community's social hierarchy.

Other members of the Colonia 5000 joined him at the Mestre Irineu's and as they lived quite far, he was given permission to produce his own Daime and to preside over works ,as long as he attended some of the main celebrations held at Alto Santo and handed over half of the brew he produced . This agreement was honored as long as Mestre Irineu lived, but after his death Leôncio Gomes, who vied with him for the leadership of the center, began to question the agreement In 1974, during one of the sporadic police raids against his community, hoping to show his allegiance to law and order, Padrinho Sebastião proposed to perform a Daime work for the authorities which would include a solemn hoisting of the Brazilian flag. Leôncio Gomes, who did not agree with the idea, said that if he wanted to introduce changes in the ritual he should hoist a flag in his own house... This disagreement was the catalyst of a definitive separation between the two. According to various stories, Padrinho Sebastião then walked away , followed by his numerous family and a by great part of the Alto Santo daimistas. From then on he began holding his own independent meetings at Colonia 5.000.

That same year the community organization of the Colony was reinforced and the old, traditional "mutirão" system was substituted by totally collectivized agricultural work. The new center soon attracted not only the field-workers from the neighborhood, but also members of the Rio Branco middle-class and young people coming from many parts of Brazil and abroad.

Stressing his autonomy in regard to the Alto Santo, but remaining faithful to the old traditions of the vegetalista "ayahuasqueros", Padrinho Sebastião occasionally introduced other "teacher-plants" in his works. He emphasized that they should be used correctly so that they might grant access to astral secrets and not mere profane entertainment. Of these other entheogens, the one that was most used was "Cannabis", whose spiritual name according to Padrinho Sebastião was Santa Maria" and which he claimed corresponded to the spiritual force of the Virgin Mother, a feminine energy that counterbalances the Daime, or God the Father, a masculine energy.

For some time, Santa Maria was used in concentration work, with a specific ritual aimed at healing. At the same time there was a tendency to consider inadequate the more profane, daily use of the plant. In spite of this the Colonia 5.000 was invaded by the Federal Police, in October, 81; and its sacred Cannabis plantations, called the Santa Maria gardens, were burnt and some its leaders, including

Padrinho Sebastião prosecuted. This also gave rise to a series of official measures against all groups using ayahuasca, even those who disapproved of the use of Cannabis. This persecution culminated with an explicit prohibition of the use of ayahuasca which was placed for some time on the list of illicit substances. This led the Colonia 5.000 to suspend the use of Cannabis in its official rituals and to recommend its followers to do likewise.

During the late 70's, the Colonia 5.000 went through a rapid process of expansion, attracting new members and sympathizers from all social classes, coming from various parts of Brazil and from abroad. Towards the end of the decade, the area began to show itself too small to accommodate its three or four hundred inhabitants. The intensive deforestation of the Rio Branco region began to show its terrible consequences, such as changes in the weather and invasions of insects which destroyed the plantations. This, added to the lack of financial resources needed to mechanize agricultural production led to a drop in production. Padrinho Sebastião began to talk about moving the community further away from the city and in 1980, with the authorization of the Instituto de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (The Colonization and Agricultural Reform Institute) - INCRA, he began the settlement of land in the municipality of Boca do Acre, Amazonas, which was considered to have no owner. During two years, the community worked planting rubber in an spot he called "Rio do Ouro", which in May 1982 occupied an area of approximately 13.000 hectares with 22 households, 12.500 rubber trees in production, 215 settlers and an annual production of between 10 and 15 tons of rubber (13).

However a company from the south then claimed ownership of the land and Padrinho Sebastião started announcing that this was not yet the site determined by the astral plane for the community to build its New Jerusalem .

So, in January he led his followers to another area suggested by the INCRA, on the banks of the Mapiá igarapé a river that runs into the Purús river, in the Pauini municipality, in the state of Amazonas. Once again, relying solely on the physical strength of its members and their desire to work their own land, and not counting on any kind of financial help, the community embarked on this new adventure, undertaking the colonization of a stretch of the rain forest, isolated from the rest of civilization, in an area

that, to this day, can only be reached after a two day canoe journey from the nearest town, Boca do Acre.

Although it was encouraged by the official land settlement institute, INCRA,, the colonization of this new area did not follow the customary pattern since it was carried out on a totally communitarian basis whereas land in the region is usually attributed to specific individuals.

These activities of the Daimistas have much in common with messianic movements "where the reorganization of a society, or the production of a new one is the result of the joint effort of a social group and a charismatic personality" (14). Monteiro da Silva, as well as Fróes, attributes messianic characteristics to these Daimista movements, owing to their composition, the structure of their leadership and their effort to give a religious answer to economic problems and social anonymity. Stressing this argument Padrinho Sebastião, himself, and Alfredo, his son, announced Mestre Irineu as the New Messiah who under the name of Jura or Juramidam was considered to have brought a Third Testament. His task being the building of the Realm of God, the New Jerusalem, in the forest, the only place where survival would be possible after "the chaos that is being prepared for the world through fire, atomic forces, and pollution" (15). Although not all his followers were going to live in Mapiá, there would come a time, on the eve of the great "balance", when every one of them would be called to go and live there, the only safe place to be.

Couto disagrees with such an analysis, arguing that this exodus did not take place in a context of social upheaval, deprivation or family breakdown, generally taken to characterize messianic movements. This anthropologist is certainly right in calling attention to the importance the daimistas attributed to family values and to their central role in the organization of the community's move to the forest. Couto claims that although a mythical family relationship is established among all the members of the various currents of the religion, which he even calls "The Juramidam Family", the relationship among blood relatives followed the traditional patterns set by the greater Brazilian society. Even in cases where some relatives do not, there are no restrictions with regard to them or to others that do not belong to the brotherhood. At all times the recommendation is for harmonious coexistence.

As mentioned before, there is a tendency to reinforce traditional gender roles and their differences are emphasized in the rituals. Women, for instance, are allocated the task of caring for the "Psychotria viridis" plants and of cleaning their leaves for the preparation of the brew, while the men are in charge of collecting, cleaning and pounding the vine, as well as preparing, storing and distributing the brew. Traditional taboos are maintained, like excluding menstruating women from certain phases of the manufacturing rituals. Value is also placed on virginity and, during the sessions the women and the maidens wear different badges on their dresses and are given separate areas in the room. But , as happens everywhere, the traditional prescriptions are not always followed, and there are even cases of bigamy and homosexual relationships to be found among the daimistas. Members coming from an urban middle class frequently question rules considered to be "machista" and there are centers led by women.

As the anthropologist Alba Zaluar, had already noticed in her research among other Brazilian field workers, this often introduces a cleavage in families, allowing their members to establish strong ties of solidarity with people of the same sex of other families (17). Among daimistas there is a marked existence of a "woman's world" and the separation between sexes even in daily life is common. Although, the male leader , or "Padrinho" has overall authority , there is always a "Madrinha", responsible for the women.

The "backpackers" and the new churches

During the 70's, the military regime using brute force managed to overcome all organized political resistance . This was when the hippie-inspired "Peace and Love" ideology made its belated appearance in Brazil . In the more advanced and democratic societies of North America and Europe, this ideology was an answer to the excesses of a wasteful consumerist society that had shown itself unable to avoid the horrors and stupidity of the Vietnam war or the misery and marginalization of certain minority groups in their own midst.

It was commonly held among the members of this peace and love movement that there was no possibility of a true social change that was not preceded by an inner revolution occurring at an individual level. So there was a great interest in means and techniques that might liberate individuals from an over

materialistic and over rational life style. There was a search for alternative values in cultures considered to be less "bourgeois". There arose great interest in Oriental, Afro-Brazilian and Indian philosophy, religions practices etc.

The use of psychoactive substances, like Cannabis, LSD and certain mushrooms represented to many a way to develop their spirituality. However, as there was no commonly shared tradition that might offer the necessary guidelines to render this way safe and fruitful ,for many the consumption of these substances soon lost the seriousness of a spiritual quest, to become simple entertainment.

Some, rejecting the commonly held aspirations of upward social mobility, dropped out of their jobs or schools, and set off to start Utopian rural communes trying to eke out a living from subsistence agriculture handicrafts or artistic production . Others took to the roads recently built by the military regime to further their control over the Brazilian territory, hitchhiking round the country in search of a community guided by the ideals of "peace and love", and close to nature.

At that time, it was common for young members of the middle class , mainly from the prosperous Southeast of Brazil, to set out to the Andes, usually in the direction of the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu, in Peru. The journey some times also awoke in them an interest in Amazonian frontier, its people and their customs .

A small number of these ended up going to Acre hearing about Daime and eventually drinking the brew. For them , the Colonia 5.000 seemed to be the answer to their longings. There they found a fully established agrarian community led by the venerable and hospitable Padrinho Sebastião who beckoned to them with his eclectic doctrine of Indian origin and offered to guide them along a well marked road to initiation and spiritual learning. Through the use of ayahuasca, they gained immediate access to experience of ecstasy and enlightenment that followers of other spiritualist traditions take a lifetime to attain.

After a time Padrinho Sebastião had built himself a large following of people coming from all over Brazil and even from abroad. Frequently, after a more or less long stay in the region, the visitors would go back home, taking with them their new ideals and spreading, among their colleagues, friends and relatives, news of their newly adopted faith.

Gradually a few small daimista centers were set up in Southeastern Brazilian metropolitan areas and in a few South American countries. Although they tried to remain true to the principles and practices they had learned in the Amazon, the new social, cultural and ecological contexts ended up producing a few inevitable changes. The very distance between Acre and these urban centers, was already a selecting factor based on economic and life style considerations since not everyone could afford the expense or dispose of the time needed for the initial journey. Therefore, on arriving at these urban centers the doctrine mainly reached middle class young people and adults who were already interested in spiritualism and in the use of hallucinogens.

In November, 1982, the first Daime church, outside the Amazon Region was formally set up. It was named "Centro Eclético de Fluente Luz Universal Sebastião Motta de Melo (The Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light Sebastião Motta de Melo) - CEFLUSME, better known as Céu do Mar (Sea Heaven) and was established in the town of Rio de Janeiro, under the direction of the psychologist Paulo Roberto Silva e Souza. It is located in the large urban Tijuca Forest, a natural reserve protected by the Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal (Brazilian Forest Development Institute) .

Sometime later, another daimista rural community was started, in Visconde de Mauá, Rio de Janeiro, under the leadership of Alex Polari de Alverga, a writer, poet , ex-guerrilla fighter and longtime political prisoner. After that other centers were set up in Pedra de Guaratiba , Friburgo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Belo Horizonte, Santa Luzia, Caxambú, Airuoca, Minas Gerais, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, São Paulo. as well as in Argentina and Uruguay.

The Federal Narcotics Council and the new CEFLURIS statutes

The spread of the religion in metropolitan areas, and its growing public visibility due to the conversion of a few television celebrities, occurred at a time when the government authorities were increasingly concerned over the use of psychoactive substances. In 1985, the Divisão of Medicamentos do Ministério da Saúde-DIMED-(Pharmaceuticals Division of the Ministry of Health),decided to place the

"Banisteriopis caapi" in its list of forbidden products, in the national territory. without making the required consultation of the Federal Narcotics Council whose prerogative this was.

This led the Centro Espírita Beneficiente União do Vegetal, another ayahuasca using religious group, independent of Mestre Irineu's tradition, to petition the Council for an annulment of the measure. As a result, the Council's president , the lawyer Tecio Lins e Silva, set up a working group to gather more information on the subject.

Initially, two councilors, the medical professors, Isaac Karniol and Sergio Seibel, went to Rio Branco to gather information. The report they presented to the Council on January 31, 1986, was unanimously approved.

The report made the following points:

a - Ayahuasca has been used by these religious groups for many decades, not causing any noticeable social damage;

b - Among the users of the brew the predominating moral and behavioral patterns were "in every way similar to those existing and recommended in our society, in certain cases even in a particularly rigid manner ";

c - It's necessary to examine in a global way the ritual use of the drink, as prepared by religious or Indian communities, and taking into account sociological, anthropological, chemical, medical, psychological and general health aspects;

d - The 02/85 DIMED resolution had included the "Banisteriopis caapi" among the forbidden drugs ignoring the 1st paragraph of the 3rd article of the Decree 85.110, of September 2/1980, which instituted the need for a previous hearing of the Narcotics Council whose prerogative it was to exert normative orientation and the supervision of the activities referring to the National System of Prevention, Control and Repression of Narcotics.

During that meeting the composition of the work group was enlarged and alongside Suely Rosenfeld (representing DIMED and the Economics Ministry), Isaac Karniol (Brazilian Medical Association), Sergio Seibel (Ministry of Social Security and Social Welfare.) and Paulo G. Magalhães Pinto (Federal Police Narcotics Repression Division) there were also included a number of scholars:

- Francisco Cartaxo Rolim - Sociology lecturer at the Rio de Janeiro State Federal University;

- João Manoel de Albuquerque Lins, Philosophy lecturer at the Pontifítial Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, and doctor in Philosophy and Theology at the Roman Gregorian University in Italy;

- João Ronildo Bueno, professor at the Department of Psychiatry at the Medical College of t the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro;

- Gilberto Alves Velho, professor and anthropologist at the National Museum, councilor of the Brazilian Society for Scientific Progress - SBPC and ex-president of the Brazilian Anthropological Association.

- Regina Maria do Rego Monteiro de Abreu, university lecturer and. anthropologist.

- Clara Lúcia de Oliveira Inem, clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst and consultant at the those in the new CEFLURIS, are notoriously unstable and prone to divisions. But, unlike groups whose autonomy is guaranteed by their leader's simple ability to gather groups of followers around them, the daimista churches, specially those in urban areas outside the Amazonian Region, are dependent on a central organization to ensure a regular supply of the brew. The "Banisteropsis caapi" and "Psychotria viridis" plantations are still not fully developed and the ingredients of the brew must frequently be gathered in the rain forest. This, besides being extremely laborious, demands a knowledge of the region and its mysteries which is seldom accessible to outsiders. Therefore, despite all the tendencies toward fragmentation that frequently arise, it is quite likely that the daimista organizations will keep their organizational unity, and the resulting ritual and doctrinal uniformity, to a much greater extent than the Afro-Brazilian religions, for example, who have no equivalent common binding interests.

Before his death, Padrinho Sebastião chose his son, Alfredo Gregório de Melo, to be his successor. Padrinho Alfredo, had already gained considerable leadership experience in Colonia 5.000, and in the Rio do Ouro and Mapiá settlements. Endowed with the charisma of being son and nominated heir of Padrinho Sebastião, one of the founders of Mapiá and having a collection of hymns (hinario)which was considered suitable to sing during the most important "official works", Alfredo Gregório de Melo was a good choice for a new leader. Nevertheless he faced a series of challenges in asserting his command due to his relative youth and to the political pretensions of a few of Padrinho Sebastiãos earliest followers both

in the Amazon and in the Southern cities. The importance of these leaders of a more urban origin tends to grow, due to their ability to establish working relationships with the large institutions which are important in the political and economic affairs at a national level, with which the daimista communities must now keep in permanent contact . It is now said that, whereas his father's mission had been to build the "community", it is now up to him to build and strengthen the "brotherhood", or rather the large scale organization of the various Daime organizations that follow his father's teachings.

Although this book is basically about the "Santo Daime" religion, one must not forget about the existence, in the West Amazonian Region and in other parts of Brazil, of other religious groups that also use ayahuasca. Although they all make constant references to the forest and its spiritual power, their followers are, in fact, largely of urban origin and continue to work and live in some of the main Brazilian cities .

The one with the largest following and most widely spread throughout Brazil, is the Centro Espírita Beneficiente União do Vegetal-UDV (Benevolent Spiritualist Centre of the Vegetable Union) which was founded in 1961 by the rubber tapper, José Gabriel da Costa, better known as Mestre Gabriel, in the town of Plácido Castro, Acre It nowadays has its main Amazonian center in Porto Velho, Rondônia, and its national offices in Brasilia. This religious doctrine shows a spiritist influence and avoids any kind of possession trance during its ceremonies, in spite of the original connection of Mestre Gabriel with umbanda, an Afro-Brazilian religion of possession. Although it does not deny the therapeutical properties of the "miração", or shamanic trance produced by the drink, the UDV, fearing charges of unlicensed medical practices, claims not use the brew with that purpose, and concentrates on the furthering the spiritual development of its members. In spite of its rigidly centralized structure, the União do Vegetal has suffered schisms and defections of some of its important leaders, however, unlike the Daime organizations, it refuses to acknowledge the new groups as members of the UDV tradition and even threatens them with prosecution should they insist on using the same name.

Another ayahuasca doctrine is the one founded by Manoel Pereira de Matos. In 1947, after spending six months in Alto Santo, under Mestre Irineu's guidance, he began to perform his own rituals and started a new center on the outskirts of Rio Branco which he called "Centro Espírita Culto de Oração

Casa de Jesus Fonte de Luz" (Spiritist Center and Prayer Cult House of Jesus Fountain of Light).Following Matos's death in 1958, his group was torn by dissent and after a time some of its members opened a new church, called "Centro Espírita Daniel Pereira de Matos" (Spiritist Center Daniel Pereira de Matos). The leadership of the original church was left in the hands of Manoel Hipolito Araujo. These and other similar religious groups which follow Matos's teachings are commonly known as "A Barquinha" (the Little Boat), and emphasize the African aspects of Brazilian popular religiosity ,cultivating possession episodes in their ceremonies as well as the more classical shamanic visionary trance brought on by taking the brew. Apart from simple worship, they are also concerned with physical and spiritual healing.

Couto, also, mentions the existence of an Umbanda "terreiro" (center) where ayahuasca is used, it is the "Centro Espírita Fé, Luz, Amor e Caridade - Terreiro de Maria Baiana" (Spiritualistic Center, Faith, Light, Love and Charity - Maria Baiana's Center) in the Rio Branco rural zone, on the left bank of the Acre river. Unfortunately, there is little anthropological information available about it (Couto - 1989:244).

A New Report by the Narcotics Council - June 1992.

The report produced by the Federal Narcotics Council work group, in 1987, had been approved and the religious use of ayahuasca liberated(20). Yet, despite legal principle, an anonymous accusation led to the setting up of a new a police inquiry in the town of Rio de Janeiro in 1988, reopening discussions on the propriety of the use of ayahuasca in Brazil (21).

The opening of this inquiry surprised The Federal Narcotics Council and was considered to be based on weak motives. The accusation besides being anonymous, made obviously absurd to anybody with any knowledge of the matter. Among other preposterous assertions, the anonymous denouncer claimed that:

- "Adepts of the ayahuasca sects number more than 10 million fanatics, in the great urban centers";

- "The majority of their leaders are drug addicts and former guerrilla fighters";

- After drinking the brew, "the adept is taken by exhaustion, and herbs said to be marijuana, are then burnt under the guise of incense, with temple windows and doors shut".

- "The same happens at the União do Vegetal. Unknown to any, LSD or a similar drug is added to the brew when it is to be drunk";

- "The followers are induced to "slave-labor" and to making large donations . To explain all this, the imaginative accuser added: "And what is behind this? - A guerrilla counter-attack is the most likely answer" (22).

On account of this accusation the president of the Narcotics Council designated the author of the previous, Dr. Domingos Bernardo Gialluisi da Silva Sá, to carry out further investigations so as bring the data of other reports up to date .

So Sá paid new visits to places of worship, and to several ayahuasca using religious communities talking to the leaders, listening to their followers, and taking photographs.

In his new report Sá then analyzed the facts and took into account other similar accusations which had also been leveled against the ayahuasca religions. He called attention to the small number of accusations (he only had received three, during the seven years the Federal Narcotics Council had been concerned with the subject). He considered that they were made by parents, who were unhappy with the religious option made by their children and with their search for a new life in the rural communities that followed Padrinho Sebastião’s teachings. So , the problem generally seemed to be a fundamental disagreement between parents and their children, about life projects styles considered desirable by the different generations, rather than the effects of ritual practices on their central nervous systems. Sá considered such difficulties to be similar to those of parents who might be against their children's option to enter a convent or monastery.

Apart from the anonymous accusation, The Federal Narcotics Council also investigated a technical analysis prepared by Dr. Alberto Furtado Rahde from the Coordination of the National System of Information on Toxicopharmacology, on the 1987 report . In this analysis Rahde gave priority to the toxicopharmacological aspects of the subject. Although he did not present any new information in this respect, he restated the known data on the brew's alkaloid components.

Rahde says that several alkaloids had been isolated from the "Banisteriopsis vine (jagube or mariri), of which the most important were:

a - Harmine (also called: 7 metoxi methil-9H-piride (3,4b)- indol; banisterine, yageine, telepatine, or leucoharmine);

b - Harmaline (also called: 4,9 dihydro - 7- metoxi-1methil-3H - piride (3,4 b) indol; 1-methil-7-metoxi-3,4 dihydro- betacarboline: 3,4 dihidroharmine: harmidine; methilic ether of harmalol O-methil harmalol).

From the "Psychotria ("rainha or chacruna) the following active principles were isolated:

a - Dimethiltriptamine (also known as: NN dimethiltriptamine: DMT) N Dimethil-1 H-indol 3-etanamine: 3 - (2-dimethilamine) ethil indol);

b - Monomethiltriptamine c: tetrahydro - B - carboline.

The report went on to call attention to the fact that harmine and harmoline besides being known to have hallucinogenic effects, like tetra-hydro-B-carboline, is classified as an inhibitor of monoamino-oxidase . When ingested with substances of the triptamine type they preserve the action of the triptamine. Harmine and harmaline, like dimetil triptamine, are classified as hallucinogens, and as such, have the characteristic of producing altered states of perception, mood and behavior, of which the most significant are the alterations in visual perception. According to Rahde, they might also lead to severe personality alterations.

Rhade's report continued with the reminding that dimetil triptamine is included in the list of forbidden substances of the United Nations Organization and of the Brazilian Division of Medicines-Dimed (which also includes harmine among forbidden substances in Brazil). Rhade considered that the occurrence of what he called "hallucinatory states" and physical manifestations, like vomiting and diarrhea, demonstrated that the brew is not just a placebo drink, but shows intensive action on users, although up till then , the concentration of the active principles had not been measured.

Rahde"s report ends by discussing the fact that the brew is now to be found all over the country, extrapolating its "original local use, in the Amazon jungle". He considers the UN posture of respect for Indian traditional use of proscribed hallucinogens and stimulants, not to be applicable in this case. He also inquires about the existence or not of plantations of the vine and the leaf , about the way the brew is distributed throughout Brazil and abut the constancy of its composition. He ends with a suggestion that The Federal Narcotics Council should get answers to these questions be furnished to the Federal Narcotics Council, in order to provide determine whether the use of Daime could be characterized as ritualized and restricted . Should its use not be characterized as such, he proposes that the brew be placed in the list of forbidden substances, since its effects are clearly similar to that of its already proscribed components.

Stressing the fact that the best understanding of the question of drugs, is not based on a mechanical vision, based on the predominance of a pharmacological determinism , Sá says, in his final report, that he would prefer to adopt a holistic perspective of the subject. In this case it would be necessary to take into account three different factors: the individual, the setting and the product. This position led to the request of reports to be made by: Dr. Elisaldo Carlini, Professor of Psychopharmacology at the Escola Paulista de Medicina, Dr. Isaac Karniol, Professor of Medical Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Campinas, Clodomir Monteiro da Silva, anthropologist and head of the Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences at the Federal University of Acre, as well as the author of this book, Edward MacRae, doctor in Social Anthropology and researcher at the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Escola Paulista de Medicina.

Carlini and Karniol were asked to give their opinion on three specific items: possible harmful reactions in the human organism; personality alterations and whether the altered states of perception, mood and behavior, mentioned by Rahde, necessarily had negative , harmful or pathological implications.

Carlini's reply emphasized that possible harm to the organism, would depend on a massive liberation of noradrenaline whose best known liberating agent is teramine and which could lead to a hypertension crisis. But in order for this liberation to it would be necessary that the person taking the brew consume certain types of highly fermented cheese (like Camembert) or drink large doses of certain

wines; which is not a common practice among the followers of these religions. As for the alterations in the mind of the user, these do not represent a modification of the personality, but temporary changes in the seat of their senses. In addition, such mental alterations may be channeled in a positive direction in the subject's social and individual life, and do not necessarily carry negative, prejudicial or pathologic implications.

Karniol, in turn, considered the forbidding of the religious use of the brew to be much more violent than any eventual side effects of the brew. He also considered that the possible harmful effect in the organism had not been entirely proven; and neither had the alleged severe personality changes. Neither did the altered states of perception, behavior and mood brought on by the ingestion of ayahuasca necessarily have negative , prejudicial or pathological implications.

My own anthropological report was to deal with other questions of a more socio-cultural nature. These questions were related to cultural importance of the fact that ayahuasca had been in use in Brazil for over sixty years. There was also a request for an evaluation of the allegation that the use of ayahuasca had extrapolated its place of origin, in the Amazonian jungle, as well as considerations on the notion of "ritualized and restricted use" brought up by Rahde in his report. My answer was that, as shown by Clodomir Monteiro da Silva, among others, this brew had been used for decades in Brazil, in rituals with the function of integrating its participants into their habitat and in this way promoting the peaceful and orderly behavior of the followers of the different ayahuasca using religions. The restriction of the ritual drink to the Amazonian Region, would be meaningless and equivalent to the banning of their most important religious services , once these religions are predominantly urban. Such a proscription would be counterproductive since it would lead to the structural weakening of the religious organizations which played a key role in the control of the use of the brew. Besides, it would mean doing violence against thousands of people, who had invested their lives in these religions, making them the center of their social, individual and spiritual identities I also called attention to the sad example given by the policy of repression of the Afro-Brazilian religions which had been put into practice during the beginning of the century. I also stressed that the origins of the Santo Daime religion date back to the time when the very

popular Afro-Brazilian Umbanda doctrine was being systematized (early 20's) and that the ayahuasca using religions deserved the same respect.

Clodomir Monteiro da Silva's anthropological report , one of the sources I relied on for my own work, points in the same direction, and stresses the social and ritual nature of the use of the brew, which involve a set of sequences of rites and activities that must be observed. He considered the ritual use of ayahuasca to be almost irreplaceable for the followers of those religions, owing to its psychical effects .

The report ends by agreeing with the position adopted by the Narcotics Council when it suspended the prohibition that had been imposed on the use of "ayahuasca" in 1985, stating that the community had been able to exercise adequate control over the use of the brew without the need of State intervention. Any other solution would only have created unnecessary problems. The following suggestions are then made to the Federal Narcotics Council members:

a - "Ayahuasca" (in Brazil mainly known as: Santo Daime or Vegetal), and the vegetable species National Foundation for the Welfare of Minors-Funabem.

One of the expeditions of the work group to Rio Branco, Boca do Acre and Céu do Mapiá also included Federal Police chief Sergio Sakon, one of the members of The Federal Narcotics Council.
The work. group was presided by the Rio de Janeiro lawyer Domingos Bernardo Gialluisi da Silva Sá.

Following the report's recommendations , The Federal Narcotics Council passed a resolution suspending the inclusion of "Banisteriopsis caapi" in the list of forbidden plants for the duration of the inquiry.

The research lasted two years and included interviews, the observation of ayahuasca users, the study of news reports on the various communities and visits to many of them.

Visits were held to União do Vegetal communities as well as to the daimista centers at Colonia 5.000 , Alto Santo, Boca do Acre and Céu do Mapiá in the Amazon . In the State of Rio de Janeiro research was done at the daimista churches Céu do Mar, in São Conrado, Céu da Montanha, in Mauá, and at the União do Vegetal center, in Jacarepaguá. On many occasions the councilors took the brew,

and on occasion some had visions, suffered diarrhea or vomited, all expected occurrences. They reported having invariably felt very welcome and having received hospitable treatment wherever they went.

This research led to a series of conclusions on the manner of use and the effects of the brew:

Organic Effects

Doctor Karniol, considered that, in pharmacological terms, ayahuasca should be considered a hallucinogen. Besides the expected effects of this class of substances there were also secondary ones such as: vomiting, diarrhea etc. According to him, there were insufficient elements to allow a more accurate evaluation of the clinical and mental reactions that might accompany prolonged or acute use, among adults, children, pregnant women unborn foetuses. However uncontrolled observation made by the work-group did not register any untoward effects.

It was also noted that the ayahuasca was always made from native species and it was specified that synthetic or concentrated forms of the product should receive a different treatment from the researchers should they exist.

Social Effects

It was considered that the social effects observed could not be attributed to the influence of the brew alone on the organism, but also to the surroundings, the music and the dancing.

The rural communities were considered to be very well integrated in their natural context and a harmonious interaction was observed between individuals of different ages and social class coming from different regions and different cultural backgrounds.

In spite of the geographical and cultural distances between the Amazon and Rio de Janeiro, a great doctrinal and ritual uniformity was observed in the Santo Daime and União do Vegetal centers.

The complexity of the preparation rituals meant that they were necessarily communitarian, involving a division of roles and special ceremonies of great symbolic and religious significance. The common reactions of vomiting and diarrhea, also lead the work group to believe that ayahuasca is not of easy consumption by the public in general for indiscriminate use.

The work group did not find one single objectively proven case that could lead to an unequivocal inference of social damage caused by the use of ayahuasca. On the contrary, the moral patterns maintained were considered strict, the followers seemed tranquil and happy, and were encouraged by the ritual use of the brew to search for social happiness in an orderly and hard working manner.

In his final report, the president of the work-group , on discussing the experiences brought about by the psychoactive nature of ayahuasca stated: "it is important to note that the search for a peculiar form of perception, on the part of the ayahuasca users, in their various works, does not appear to be a hallucination, if you take this word to mean mental disorder or insanity. What all the visited groups showed was a strongly communitarian project in search of self-knowledge and the sacred. It is not up to the work-group to define whether this form of experiencing self knowledge or the sacred is illusion or fantasy - other interpretations for hallucination" (18).

Further on, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas the report argues that "often, the use of faculties we all possess, even if incipiently , is classified in a superficial way as hallucination"(19). According to the report, adopting the concept of hallucination to define a ayahuasca experience makes it difficult to examine the problem, especially when it is associated to the notion of a "total war on drugs", as promoted by the American Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in the world media.

Another question, which The Federal Narcotics Council's work group considered to be of great importance was the discussion of whether or not the Amazonian and the Rio de Janeiro groups shared the same culture, for it is frequently argued that activities which might be acceptable in the State of Acre are not acceptable in the great metropolis.

This would imply a strict separation between the cultures of the two areas, something the work-group denied once they were struck by the constant presence, in Mapiá, of many "pilgrims" coming from urban areas and by the frequent visits paid to Rio de Janeiro by Padrinho Sebastião and his family.

Although the doctrine takes on certain metropolitan characteristics in Rio de Janeiro, great efforts are made to ensure that the ritual remains the same and there is a compliance with the basic values of the Amazonian community emphasizing communal concerns over individual ones.

The recommendations made by the work groups final report were accepted and Bannisteriopsis caapi was removed from the list of forbidden products and liberated for ritual use on the 26th of august 1987.

The rapid growth of the new centers, affiliated to Padrinho Sebastião's organization , and the founding of others without the formal permission the main religious leaders of the group, coupled with the concern with showing the government authorities that the use of ayahuasca was restricted to strictly controlled ritualistic ends, led to an effort to set up a new structure for CEFLURIS, that might answer more efficiently the new needs brought on by this growth.

Significantly, the elaboration of proposals for the new statutes was carried out by one the leaders coming from outside the Amazon, Alex Polari, "padrinho" of the Visconde de Mauá, daimista community, in the State of Rio de Janeiro. He called representatives of the other centers for various preliminary meetings and eventually, the proposal, which counted with the approval of Padrinho Sebastião, himself, was discussed and approved by leaders of all the churches, during a meeting held in Ceu do Mapia in May 1989.

By this statute a new institution was created and, although it was given the same name as Padrinho Sebastião's old organization " Centro Eclético da Fluente Luz Universal Raimundo Irineu Serra (CEFLURIS) (Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light Raimundo Irineu Serra), it was much wider in scope and was meant to congregate all the Daime groups both in Brazil and abroad that followed his teachings. According to their size and to the degree to which they were able to carry out the activities performed at the mother church in Mapia, they were classified in four categories. In a descending order of importance these were: "churches with special charters" (the only ones to be authorized to start new nuclei), "churches with definitive licenses", "churches with temporary licenses" and "spiritual first aid centers" (composed by a minimum of three daimistas, and associated to a church with special license).

When they were drawn up, these statutes seemed somewhat Utopian due to the complexity of the relationship between the various centers which frequently extrapolated the proposed bureaucratic order.

Religious organizations of a loose structure and developed around one charismatic figure, like that are used to make it: "Banisteropsis caapi" (commonly known as "cipó"; "jagube" or "mariri") and the "Psychotria viridis" (known as "folha" , "rainha" or "chacrona") should not be placed on list of proscribed substances drawn up by Dimed, or any other organ responsible for enforcing article, 36, of the Narcotics Law .

b - The illegitimate use of the "ayahuasca" or any other substance acting on the central nervous system, may subjected to reexamination if based on new facts, whose the essential aspects have not yet been investigated by The Federal Narcotics Council. This must be so since the obedience of decisions already taken by the Council is important both for the stability of relations within the public administration itself and for the protection of the individual interests involved;

c -A mixed commission should be set up by the Federal Narcotics Council, with the possible membership of outside experts and representatives of the organizations that make a ritual use of "ayahuasca" with the aim of consolidating common principles and rules, that may be subject to public supervision .

These recommendations were given unanimous approval by the Federal Narcotics Council, in June, 1992 , reinforcing the legitimacy and legality of the religious use of ayahuasca in Brazil.

Notes:

1) Meggers 1977:185.

2) Galvão 1983:6.

3) Mestre Irineu's early years are little known. There are many stories which are frequently contradictory or even mistaken. An example of the confusion existing on the subject is the diversity of names of places where he is supposed to have been born. In spite of what some earlier authors have written , it is now clear that he came from São Vicente do Ferré, in the State of Maranhão.

4) Monteiro da Silva 1983:54.

5) Once again, the information available is contradictory. Some say the "ayahuasquero" was called Don Crescêncio, and Pizango was the name of the spiritual being he incorporated .

6) See B.G. Dantas, 1983 and Y. Maggie, 1988 on the persecution of Afro-Brazilian cults.

7) Maggie 1989:5 and 6.

8) Couto 1987:58.

9) Couto 1989:59.

10) Fróes 1986:25.

11) Monteiro da Silva 1985:20.

12) Groissman 1991:13.

13) Couto 1989:106.

14) Oro 1989:11.

15) Fróes 1986:123-5.

16) Couto 1989:108.

17) Zaluar 1983:110.

18)Report prepared by The Federal Narcotics Council work-group pg. 29.

19) Report prepared by The Federal Narcotics Council work-group pg. 30.

20) For information on the Federal Narcotics Council report I am grateful Dr. Domingos Bernardo Gialliusi da Silva Sá who presided the work group set up to study the ritual use of ayahuasca in Brazil and whose work is frequently quoted in this book.

21) Police inquiry, 09,89 - DRE/SR/DPF/RJ, ordered by M.M. Dr. Judge - 13th Federal Branch, Rio de Janeiro.

22)Report by The Federal Narcotics Council work-group, issued on July 2, 1992, p.p. 1 and 2.

CHAPTER IV

The Santo Daime Rituals

The Santo Daime doctrine made its initial appearance and began to develop at a time when the decadence of the rubber based Amazonian economy forced many of the old rubber tappers to migrate to the urban areas. The basic aspects of the doctrine reflect the Northeastern Brazilian peasant customs and the South-American-Indian traditions which formed the basis of their original culture .In this context, experiences with Daime, were unusual states of conscience and perception, which led to the social construction of a reality of its own, pertaining to a transition between two different forms of civilization.

Monteiro da Silva considers that the individual or collective trances and shamanic flights, should not be taken as simply a liberation of tensions or a sublimation of libidinous pulsation, as suggested by some more superficial analysts of the subject. He considers it more appropriate to think of these psychic phenomena in the context of the migration from forest to town, considering the Santo Daime religion to be a collective rite of passage. It would be a way of attempting to account for the ambiguities of the new project of order. The capitalist expansion disorganizes the old way of life, but on having to live with this new disorder, it reencounters the dionisiac nature lost by the positivism and utilitarianism of Western civilization (1).

The Santo Daime religion is a result of a syncretic process involving elements of both peasant and urban social formations. Thus, one can detect traces of South American Indian culture alongside concentration techniques taken from Western popular religiosity. There is also a close relation between the rituals and the day-to-day activities of the followers of this doctrine. The syncretic process by which the religion developed is a reflection of the needs and pressures present in the context in which it occurred. The consumption of ayahuasca during the rituals, cannot, therefore, be described as a simple manifestation of a pathological individual or collective delirium.

Following this reasoning, Monteiro da Silva considers that the rituals are of great importance for the permanent creation and legitimatization of the doctrinal discourse of this religious group. He ends by

considering that there is a correlation between the central idea of cleanliness /search for order and harmony, that runs through all the rituals of the group taking on the shape of a great ritual of transcendence and cleansing; and the "plausibility structures" of the religion - understood as "expedients through which human groups try to render empirical reality acceptable." (2)

Similar conclusions are possible when one uses the concept developed by Victor Turner, the anthropologist who believed there was a permanent tension in society between the tendencies to structure or order those that pushed towards anti-structure or "communitas". Turner considered that there was a human necessity to participate in both and people who are starved of one of them in their daily activities, search for it in liminal rituals. So, while individuals holding inferior positions in the social structures aspire for a symbolic superiority, those in superior positions might aspire for the symbolic universal fraternity of the "communitas", and even submit themselves to penance's in order to attain it. From this point of view, one might consider the Santo Daime rituals to be actions that tend to move social life and, consequently, society, towards structure and order.

This is Couto's argument and he considers that the Santo Daime ceremonies are different from inversion rituals (carnival, for instance) or from the Southeast African rituals of rebellion , studied by Turner, where the balance is shifted in the direction of the "communitas" pole. This is because Daimista rituals push the system towards structure, reinforcing the cosmological order which is lived intensely , being brought out of its customary latent , unconscious status and made to manifest itself during the rituals. The internal order is constantly reaffirmed by the individual effort of each participant, during his ritual "performance", when he submits himself to the demands of the Juramidam Empire. It is through this praxis that the faithful feel they receive the "teachings", and, especially, the symbolical order, believed to be efficacious. In this symbolical reordering, the invisible channels, that connect the new members to the cosmic order, are perceived as being cleared , leading the whole system to an ascesis or to a structure (3).

This reinforcement of order was perceived by the Federal Narcotics Council work groups who were convinced that the daimistas were even more orderly than the rest of the population. They also

noted that they often claimed that their compliance to the Santo Daime doctrines had led to a positive reorganization of their lives and given them added tranquillity and happiness (4).

One should also remember Dobkin de Rios' ideas on the importance of the interaction of variables, preceding or following the ingestion of psychoactive substances in determining the perceived effects. (see "Introduction"). Of special relevance here is the shared symbolic system and the expectations of the visionary content which are part of the "cultural" variables. Alongside the biological and social aspects, they are important in leading a great number of daimistas to have similarly perceived experiences with the entheogens. As they base their interpretations of these experiences on a common symbolic repertoire presented by the hymns, the daimistas perceive their doctrinal values as being reinforced and confirmed. The main types of daimista rituals or "works" are the "hymnaries", the "concentrations", the "masses", the "healing works" and the "making of the Daime".

The Santo Daime Rituals As Performed By The Followers of Padrinho Sebastião

As happens in many spiritualist centers and among the vegetalistas, the daimista rituals are called "works" and often presuppose an intense and tiring psychic activity , even though those taking part may be in an apparently relaxed and restful position such as happens during the sessions of concentration.

It is believed that taking ayahuasca leads to a perception of the "spiritual" or "astral" world and to the possibility of carrying out a series of activities in this realm.. Accordingly there are different types of rituals for different purposes, and their form is invariably attributed to Mestre Irineu who is supposed to have learned about them from the Queen of the Forest, or the Virgin of the Conception, source of all daimista knowledge.

Thus, great emphas is given to the need to follow closely the ritual forms inherited from Mestre Irineu. As has frequently been observed by the Federal Narcotics Council work-group and other researchers, there is great uniformity in most of the rituals performed by the CEFLURIS nuclei, which is all the more remarkable, when one takes into account their geographic diversity. Yet the constant insistence on the observation of apparently unimportant details often causes a certain irritation among newcomers to the doctrine who frequently suggest altering the ritual. But the importance attributed to the conservation of the ritual form has lead to a series of official measures such as the elaboration of statutes and the setting up of a body of guardians to ensure the correct performance of the rituals. As specified in item 24 of the statutes:

"We consider, as part of our body of rituals, all those inherited directly from Mestre Irineu, and the additions made by Padrinho Sebastião and by Padrinho Alfredo Gregório de Melo. They are the only ones empowered by this statute to legislate and regulate on doctrinal matters pertaining to ritual.

Any other type of suggestion or proposal for changes in the ritual must be appreciated by the Commission on Ritual and Healing of the Supreme Church Council), the main steering and executive collegiate organism of the bodies affiliated to the CEFLURIS.

The Hymnaries

Hymnaries are considered commemorative festivities for certain religious holidays, birthdays of the leaders or simply the celebration of communion and fraternity. There is a calendar of "official hymnaries", which is supposed to be observed by all the Santo Daime churches. On such occasions, those taking part wear special clothes, called "farda branca" (white uniform), predominantly white in color and of sober cut, decorated with many colored ribbons. On their heads the women wear tinsel crowns. On other occasions, simpler "hymnaries" may be held and the plainer "farad azalea" (blue uniform) is worn, consisting of white shirts or blouses and navy blue trousers or skirts.

There are different hymnaries which are sung according to the occasion. There are the, so called, "official hymnaries" which are those "received" by some of the main "padrinhos" such as Mestre Irineu, Padrinho Sebastião or Padrinho Alfredo or some of Mestre Irineu's closest followers and which are sung on some of the most important holidays. But there are also hymns "received" by other followers of the doctrine and which may be sung on other, less formal occasions. During the "hymnary" the participants stand around a central table usually in the form of a six pointed star, on which there is a double armed "Cross of Caravacca", a rosary and other symbols of the doctrine. The men and women line up according to height on opposite sides of the room. According to the shape of the table, and the number of participants, they may be form four or six groups: men, young men, boys, women, young women and girls (see figures 2 and 3).

Many play "maracas" or rattles, accompanying the singing and marking the rhythm of the dancing. The steps are simple and vary according to the rhythm of the hymn. The singing is often accompanied by musicians playing seated around the table. This orchestra is normally composed of guitars, flutes and percussion instruments, but any other instrument may be added. The ritual begins at a predetermined time, generally at sunset. To mark its beginning, the catholic rosary may be said or, on less formal occasions, simply three Lord's Prayers and three Hail Mary's. At the end of the ceremony these prayers are repeated alongside other Catholic, Esoteric or specifically daimista ones.

After the opening prayers the Daime is then served; a small cup is handed to the adults, and a smaller amount to the children. This happens several times during the work, at approximately two-hourly intervals.

Depending on the occasion and on the hymnary being sung, the ritual may last between six or twelve hours. During this period, the participants must keep to their place in the line, refraining from talking or from any other kind of behavior that might hinder other people in their efforts to concentrate.

Halfway through the ritual there is usually an intermission lasting for about one hour, the only time allowed for conversation. Sometimes, still under the influence of the beverage, people may opt to remain silent and in a state of introspection.

During the intermission the participants are given permission to leave the room and may eat something light or drink a little water. Smoking is also permitted, but at a distance, so that the tobacco smoke does not reach the place where the ceremony is being held.

At the end of the ritual, a few catholic prayers are recited again and the leader pronounces a last invocation to God the Father, The Virgin Queen Mother, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Patriarch Saint Joseph and to all the spiritual beings of the celestial court. At the end of the session, and every time they take the brew, those taking part in the session cross themselves, thus emphasizing their commitment to Christian principles during their astral work.

Alex Polari explains the meaning of this ritual:

"The hymns are a mirror of the life and of the human relations within the community. It's the great opportunity for cleansing and transformation, where all, in brotherhood, standing shoulder to shoulder in the current of energy, spend up to twelve hours singing and voyaging internally under the guidance of the hymns and the Daime experience. During this period one sings and dances to the hymns evoking the remembrance of the origin of everything. We worship God, rendering Him all homage and during that night as it becomes day, we make new commitments to Love, Truth and Charity. We feel part of the Whole, ready to understand our faults and to reconcile ourselves with our brethren. We are stimulated to change and improve ourselves, with more Faith, so as not to deny our way and with more firmness to

keep to it. At the end, happiness, the Sun rising, an embrace, the blessing, the hand shake, many questions answered.

During the ritual, some of the participants, moved by their visions or going through difficulties in their process of introspection, may show signs of unrest, and, maybe, even loss of control over their movements. Others go through physiological reactions to their the ingestion of ayahuasca, feeling nausea and occasionally vomiting or suffering from diarrhea.

To deal with such cases, to maintain order in the room and enforce the ritual norms, some of the more experienced daimistas are nominated "guardians". It is their duty to determine where the participants must place themselves in the lines and to make sure everyone keeps to his place. They must also oversee the flow of the dancing, resolving any kind of disruption, helping those going through difficulties, controlling the entrance and the exit, etc.

The danced hymnaries are supposed to be occasions of happiness and brotherly feelings. They are therefore open to all who wish to take part, regardless of whether they wear the uniform or not, the only requirement being the compliance to the rules demanding an abstinence of sex and alcohol during the three preceding days and during the following three. Any other restriction should be simply due to practical questions such as the need to avoid over crowding or a disproportional number of newcomers in comparison to the number of more experienced daimistas in uniform.

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The Concentration

Other rituals are usually closed to those who do not wear the uniform. Such is the case of the "concentration works", performed by uniformed daimistas on the 15th and 30th of every month. Lasting for between two to four hours, this ritual which aims to promote spiritual development is largely performed in silence , while those taking part remain seated keeping their backs straight. Initially, they must try to focus their minds in one direction leading to a gradual quieting of the stream of thought. Once this has been accomplished, they enter into a state of meditation and identification with the "Internal and Higher Self", and with the "Divine Power", transcending all ideas, names and forms. This ceremony, which may

also include reading from the Gospels and from the sacred scriptures of other great religions or instructions and sermons by the commander of the works, usually ends with all those present standing and singing Mestre Irineu's last eleven hymns which are considered to be a summary of his doctrine.

Latecomers are not usually allowed in during these sessions and the Daime is only served at given moments. The point of these rules is to avoid any disturbance of the atmosphere of tranquillity and complete silence, essential for meditation

The Mass

The most solemn Daime ritual is the mass for the dead. During such an occasion, ten hymns are sung which deal with the subject of death .The work begins with the saying of the Catholic rosary and between each hymn there are three repetitions of the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. Marking the solemnity of the proceedings, there is no dancing and the singing is not accompanied by instruments.

The Healing Works

As discussed above, ayahuasca is frequently used by shamans and vegetalistas to fight physical and spiritual illness. It is through healing episodes attributed to their shamanic abilities that ayahuasquero masters become respected and influential in their communities. So healing is probably the field in which variations in ritual occur most often, since the gift of healing is considered and individual attribute. Therefore, those who distinguish themselves as healers, tend to develop their own way of doing things, adopting the practices that best fit their specific powers and personal idiosyncrasies. In the case of the Peruvian "mestizo" vegetalistas, for example, in spite of their common ideas about the nature of illnesses and about the principles of healing, each shaman has his own songs, allied spirits and specific methods of healing .

Among the daimistas Mestre Irineu was known, above all, as a powerful healer, as was Padrinho Sebastião and a few other of their followers. The daimista healers' repertoire of religious conceptions is much more restricted than that of the "mestizo" healers, familiar with elements of many Indian, European

and African cultures, borrowing and adapting them in the way they find most suitable. But, even feeling a need to remain faithful to their doctrine, the followers of Padrinho Sebastião , consider their center to be free and eclectic, allowing for other influences in their work and this also gives them a certain degree of flexibility in their rituals.

So, alongside the traditional ceremonies taught by Mestre Irineu, the followers of his doctrine resort to a wide range of other healing techniques.

Although all the rituals involving the taking of the brew are considered to be potentially healing(8), traditionally two of them have been considered to be specially effective. The basic principle is the search for salvation of all those taking part through the indoctrination of spirits and the offering of charity to suffering souls.

a. **The opening of the table, prayer work , table work or work with crosses**. Monteiro da Silva(1985) considers this to be a ritual which aims to diagnose the causes of disturbances and provide spiritual first aid. Froes, Couto and the official

CEFLURIS book of ritual norms, on the other hand consider that they aim to deliver the patient from "obsession" and "from negative fluids". This ceremony may be held in the patient's presence, but may also be held in his absence when the simple invocation of his name will be sufficient.

In order to hold this ceremony there must be an odd number of participants, which may range from three to nine. Each one must hold a cross in his left hand and a candle in his right one (regardless of the number of people taking part, there must be nine crosses, and if there are not as many people present, those that are left without someone to hold them may be placed on the central table). This is a relatively short ceremony, and should be repeated on three consecutive days. All those taking part must be in observance of the Daime interdictions of sec and alcoholic drinks, and must strive for a state of harmony and interior cleanliness. Only a small amount of Daime is served on these occasions and not necessarily to all those present. Apart from a concentration, there is a recitation of the Roman Catholic prayer Hail Queen and of another against evil and dark spirits. A few predetermined hymns are sung, which seem to be taking the place of the "healing calls", that used to be made during the early days when the doctrine

was still being developed, in order to invoke certain healing spirits like Tupequapá, a forest spirit who detains great knowledge on herbs(9).

b.Concentration works with healing hymns. These ceremonies are considered to be a kind of intensive therapy, and demand cleanliness of body and mind. To attain this larger amounts of the brew are served, frequently leading to strong bouts of vomiting and diarrhea, which certain scholars have considered to be cathartic and ab-reactive(10).

The ceremony consists in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Hail Queen and a consecration of the room. After an hour long concentration, a specific selection of hymns is sung.

In their basic form, these two "works" keep very closely to Mestre Irineu's original instructions, although in the CEFLURIS groups they also sing a few hymns received by Padrinho Sebastião and some of his followers. In the centers following his guidance these ceremonies are commonly called "star works", owing to the shape of the table around which they are held. It is usually placed in the middle of a hexagonal room built specially for this purpose and known as the "Star House".

But there is also another type of work, which was developed more recently and which shows strong umbandista influence. They are known as "banca"(bench) or "Saint Michael in the woods" works, and aim at the "indoctrination of suffering spirits", "deobssessions" and other activities of "spiritual charity". During these ceremonies there are frequent episodes of spiritual communications or incorporations. These works consist of prayers, concentrations, hymns and drinking Daime. Many of those taking part may be "acted upon"(possessed) by spiritual beings, and the development of the session becomes less predictable. But even in these cases the person in charge of the session is in control and the mediums under possession must have his permission to make itself manifest, and it is also he who controls the singing of hymns and the making of calls.

This kind of work with possession episodes has recently become more frequent and accepted, after a special area was specially set aside, in Ceu do Mapiá, for umbanda ceremonies, a few other centers followed suit. For a time there was even an attempt on the part of a leader from São Paulo to hold joint Daime and Candomblé sessions. But, although umbanda is acceptable to many daimistas, due to its Catholic syncretism which is very reminiscent of the Santo Daime doctrine, Candomblé, with its greater

esteem for purity of its pagan African roots, is harder to assimilate, and many are loath to mix it with Daime. Nevertheless there seems to be a marked tendency to diminish the distance that Mestre Irineu is said to have tried to keep between his doctrine and the Afro-Brazilian possession religions(11).

Some writers make a distinction between different methods used by daimista healers, calling one type "direct therapeutic techniques" (making use of medicinal plants, poultices, massages etc.) and the "indirect" ones (using dreams, visions, "astral work" etc.). But, the basic instrument is the Daime and its main allies: the spirits of the water, of the forest and of the astral plane; certain collections of hymns, the feeling of brotherhood (in the dancing, in the help offered during healing works, etc.); other allies are the medicinal plants and different types of diets - " by the mouth", " in the bed" and "from the surroundings" (12).

The techniques employed by healers, during the works may be classified as follows: (13)

"Mirações"(Visions): when the healer receives detailed information, from divine beings, to be transmitted to the patients.

Autoscopy: journeying inside the patient's body with the help of a spiritual guide, who diagnoses its physical and mental condition.

Co-autoscopy: when more than one participant journey inside someone's body, a room or an open place . They feel they are having visions in common.

Ecstatic Flight: A journey through different places in the world with a specific mission.

Possession: Identical phenomenon to the mediumnic incorporation in Afro-Brazilian cults.

Alongside these techniques, the daimista healers may resort to others, drawn from different spiritual traditions or from their own inspiration. So, it is common for them to resort to prayer-sayers, either in Céu do Mapiá or in Colônia 5.000 and Padrinho Sebastião, himself, at the end of his life, did not hesitate in consulting with shamans from other traditions, in his search for relief from illness. It is said that one of them, in the Boca do Acre area, extracted objects and insects from his body. Later this material was put in a jar an shown to whoever might have been interested. Padrinho Sebastião died shortly after a

work, that took place in the daimista center, Rainha do Mar (Sea Queen) in Pedra de Guaratiba, Rio de Janeiro, during which he underwent treatment by an Umbandista healer.

Another story is told of a young man said to be "suffering from mental and emotional disorder and whose personality who was taken in chains to Padrinho Sebastião, in Céu do Mapiá. He was asked to look after the boy "whose personality had been shattered and who was visibly under great mental and emotional distress". Padrinho Sebastião held a sequence of three sessions of St. Michael's works, on consecutive days. On the third day, in place of the traditional work, he ordered the young boy to help slaughter and quarter an ox, using a large, dangerous looking knife and getting himself heavily splattered with blood. On the following day the traditional work cycle was resumed and in the end the young man showed signs of marked improvement and became capable once more of maintaining normal conversation. He then reported having received a threat of death from a friend and this was them considered to be the cause of his ailment (14).

Among the most recent techniques, incorporated to the daimista healing repertoire , is the use of crystals to reestablish the " balance of energy" of those undergoing difficulties during the works. In São Paulo, for instance, the godmother of Flôr das Águas church had already developed a healing technique using different types of crystals, even before affiliating herself to the doctrine. Under her guidance, this practice acquired considerable importance, among daimistas in São Paulo.

The "Feitio" or Preparation of the Daime

The making of the brew involves a complex ritual procedure which is frequently considered to be the most important of the daimista ceremonies since all the other rituals depend on the brew produced on these occasions. The manufacture of the beverage follows detailed ritual prescriptions and must be correctly executed, in order to assure the efficacy of the sacrament. Since the brew is considered to be a divine being, akin to the consecrated host in the Roman Catholic Church, the "feitio" is, an act of magic and consecration, demanding from that those taking part undergo a rigorous physical and spiritual preparation.

The process is extremely laborious and physically demanding. Those who go into the forest, in search of the ingredients commonly undergo all kinds of privations and discomforts and those who are directly involved in the manufacture must carry out tasks involving great physical effort such as hammering the vine to reduce it to fiber chopping wood and cleaning the oven. But this ritual is also considered to be a moment allowing great spiritual purification and interior development, demanding silence and great concentration. It is, also, the only ritual during which the Daime supply is free available for all to take as much as they wish.

During this ritual, the exhaustion and the effect of the brew bring the participants face to face with their weakness and personal difficulties and more than ever those taking part are led to understand the importance of the basic spiritual qualities emphasized by the doctrine: firmness, purity of heart, humility, discipline, harmony, love, justice and truth. The work is carried out in a "feitio" house, specially built for the purpose, where a Caravaca cross and an image of the Virgin are always present. Other daimista symbols are also to be seen such as the sun, the moon and stars .

In the same way as in other rites, the "feitio" has a commander directing the works, generally the local "padrinho". In certain cases, he might be another highly experienced specialist, called in from other churches.

As in other rituals, men and women are kept separate, and engaged in activities considered appropriate to their gender. The usual recommendations of abstinence from sex and alcoholic beverages apply and no food may be consumed in the "feitio house". Men are given the heavy work, like collecting, transporting, cleaning and hammering the liana, besides preparing the brew, which involves handling big cauldrons with boiling liquid and keeping the fire. When the church has its own plantation, the women gather the Psychotria viridis leaves and clean them one by one. Otherwise they are gathered by the men in the forest, and brought to the village to be cleaned by the women.

The search and harvesting of the liana and the leaves is probably the most difficult part of the "feitio", requiring great experience and knowledge of the forest. Nowadays this stage tends to be reserved for specialized groups of "mateiros", or woodsmen, who have a great knowledge of the forest. Some churches now have their own plantations, which makes the work much easier and all can join in and

help. Maybe, because daimistas tend to prepare large quantities of the brew at a time(somewhere between one hundred and five hundred litres) Their harvesting methods are much simpler than those used by the vegetalistas studied by Luna and Dobkin de Rios. In place of the ceremonious procedures of the Peruvians, daimistas simply pull the liana from the trees, cutting it into pieces 20 cms. long on the spot and then, packing them into bags that may come to weigh up to fifty kilos.

The next stage happens in the "feitio" house, where men clean the pieces of liana, peeling off the skin and removing dirt and imperfect bits. During this work participants must remain in concentration and strive for their own inner cleansing. Next comes the "beating ", the ceremonial pounding of the liana, usually set to begin at 2:00 am and carried out by groups of twelve, who alternate in two hours shifts. The liana or "jagube" pieces are placed on tree stumps fixed to the ground and beaten with hard wooden hammers. Hymns are sung to help keep the rhythm of the pounding.

The next step involves the cooking of the brew. This is generally done using three sixty litre cauldrons placed over a big furnace with three openings, one for each pan and using wood for fuel. In the cauldrons the liana fibers and the leaves are placed in alternating layers , up to the brim. It is estimated that for every bag of "jagube" half a bag of leaves must be used. The important balance between the "power" and "light" of the brew depends on the right dosing of the ingredients.

The cauldrons are then filled with crystalline water and left on the fire for several hours until the liquid has been boiled down to a third of its original volume. This is the most delicate stage of the procedure and as Fróes says: "One must avoid talking to the person in charge, because he must concentrate on the boiling brew and be aware of the moment when a Santo Daime being, present in the astral plane, manifests itself to indicate the exact moment when the boiling is done and the cauldron must be removed from the fire".

Once this point is reached the cauldrons are taken off the fire and the liquid, now called "cozimento" is strained and set aside. The cauldrons are once again filled with liana and leaves, and the "cozimento" is then poured back in. Once again, the sixty litres are boiled down to twenty, and the, so

called, "First Degree Daime" is obtained. Boiling the same liana and leaves with fresh "cozimento", one gets the "Second Degree Daime" and, repeating the procedure, "Third Degree Daime".

Once ready, the brew is cooled and aired by continuous transferring from the cauldron to bowls and jars and then back again to the cauldron. The Daime is then poured into big bottles which have been previously carefully cleaned and dried and which are filled to the brim so as to ensure that no air remains , to avoid fermentation .They are then closed with wooden or cork stoppers and the quality of the brew is insured for many years,

Since this is a magic procedure to produce a sacred drink certain taboos must be observed. Just as care must be taken over the observation of dietary and sexual rules, so must there be care that none of the women taking part in the procedures be having their period. The handling the drink also requires special attention; no water may be added to the "cozimento", and Daime must not be lost or spilt on the floor. Certain times are considered to be more appropriate for the preparation of Daime, such as during the new moon . There are also times which, for a mixture of practical and doctrinal reasons, are considered to be ideal to begin certain tasks, generally in the early morning.

Depending on these various factors, on the quantity and quality of the ingredients, and on the degree of harmony and spiritual perfection among the participants, each batch of the brew, will have its specific characteristics.

Therefore each bottle must be labeled with the date of the manufacture, the phase of the moon and the "degree" of the brew.

Although there are many different ways of preparing ayahuasca and many possible variations of the basic ingredients, the followers of the Santo Daime doctrine try to keep to the strict indications left by Mestre Irineu on the subject. The process must be always the same and, besides the liana, the "chacrona" leaf and the water, no other ingredient may be added. The vegetalistas and the rubber tappers who were Mestre Irineu's original followers, lived in close contact with the forest, from which they extracted almost everything they needed for their daily life, including "jagube" and the "chacrona" leaf. Today, even those who still know the forest and its secrets, have great difficulty in finding "reinados", areas where the liana abounds. Owing to generalized deforestation and to an

overharvesting of the liana, experienced woodsmen must now spend weeks in the woods, in order to get enough for one "feitio"

Besides, this religious movement has now spread to various parts of Brazil, where the necessary ingredients for preparing Daime do not exist, and where the new daimistas, usually middle-class, have neither the strength nor the necessary know-how to carry out a "feitio". So, these groups must rely supplies prepared by specialists working full time, in Colônia 5.000 and in Céu do Mapiá.

Due to the importance of this ritual, in the spiritual development of daimistas, "feitios" are occasionally held in churches of the Southeast. The process then becomes even more laborious, requiring shipments of the liana "in natura" being sent from the Amazon as well as the presence of Amazonian specialists to act as supervisors. This makes it difficult to envisage the setting up of a genuinely autonomous production in these regions in the near future, which would be able to produce enough of the brew to attend fully to the needs of the extra-Amazonian churches. Of course, this also means that, at the doctrinal level, these groups will also continue to be governed by the Amazonians, who will keep their power to punish deviations from orthodox practices by cutting the supplies of the sacred beverage.

Notes

1. Monteiro da Silva, 1988:37.

2. Monteiro da Silva, 1985:1 and 2

3. Couto, 1989:132 and 133

4. Items IV and IX state:

IV - Moral and ethical standards of behavior, in every way, resembling those existing and recommended in our society are observed in the various communities, sometimes even in a rather rigid manner. Obedience to the law always seems to have been specially stressed.

IX - After the ceremonies, everyone goes home in an apparently normal and orderly way.

The followers of the religion seem to be tranquil and happy people. Many consider the religion and the brew to be responsible for a reorganization of their families, for a renewal in their interest in work, and for their encounter with themselves and with God. (Final report on the activities carried out by the work-group assigned by The Federal Narcotics Council to examine the question of production and consumption of vegetable species, pg. 7).

5. Although all branches of the Santo Daime Doctrine maintain great uniformity in their rituals, we are dealing here with the followers of the branch led by Padrinho Sebastião, the only one active at a nationwide level, and counting with numerous affiliated churches outside the Amazon region.

6. Two examples are the "Prayer to Caritas", borrowed from the spiritist repertoire and the prayer which invokes harmony, love, truth and justice, taken from the group known as " The Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought".

The Prayer of Caritas

God, Our Father, who art all Power and Kindness, Give strength to those suffering probation. Give light to those who search for the truth. Put in the heart of man compassion and charity.

God, give to the traveler his leading star, to the afflicted consolation, to the sick rest.

Father, give to the guilty repentance, to the spirit Truth. to the child a guide, to the orphan a father.

Lord, that Thy kindness be spread over all that you created.

Lord, bring pity on those who do not know You, hope for those who suffer.

Let Thy kindness allow the consoling spirits to pour Peace, Hope and Faith everywhere.

God, a ray, a spark of Thy love can set the world aflame. Allow it to drink from the source of this, Fecund and Infinite kindness and all tears will be dry and all pain Will be assuaged.

As one heart, on the mountain, we await Thee with open arms.

O! Power! O! Kindness! O! Beauty! O Perfection! and we desire to deserve Thy Mercy somehow.

God! Give us Strength to help us progress and reach up to Thee.

Give us pure Charity. Give us Faith and Reason.

Give us simplicity that will make our souls the mirror wherein Thy Image should be reflected. Amen.

Prayer

I thank Thee, O God! because this place is full of Thy Presence.

I thank Thee, because I live in Thy life, Truth, Health, Prosperity, Peace, Wisdom, Happiness and Love.

I thank Thee, because all who enter here shall feel Thy Presence.

I thank Thee because I am in Harmony, Love, Truth and Justice with all beings.

7. Polari de Alverga,undated:6.

8. Couto 1989:158.

9. Couto 1989:154.

10. See note 2, chapter 2.

11. Walter Dias Júnior 1990.

12. Monteiro da Silva 1985.

13. Monteiro da Silva 1985.

14. Walter Dias Jr. 1990.

15. Fróes 1986:69.

5 - The Controlled Use of Ayahuasca and Its Structuring Effects in the Santo Daime Rituals

"The first thing Daime obliges you to do, is to abandon any pretension of considering it a hallucinogenic beverage that will give you "kicks". Those who go that way slip and fall. And sometimes the fall is nasty".

Alex Polari de Alverga

"O Livro das Mirações"

Nowadays, it is often said that the use of psychoactive substances has been a widespread human practice, since time immemorial. A practice that some researchers associate to an inborn need of man to provoke periodic alterations in his conscience.

Researchers, interested in the effects of these practices emphasize the importance of considering different patterns of use: "hard" and "soft" practices.

The French anthropologist Martine Xiberras , for instance, considers the "hard" ones to be marked by a style of unrestrained consumption of products and of violent means of absorption. They imply a search for anesthesia for both body and soul, leading to a withdrawal into the self and a closing to the outside world. This results in a total submission to the power of these substances, leading to the isolation characteristic of solitary and individualistic drug addictions, like heroin dependence.

The "soft" practices lead to a state of effervescence and to the use, even if in a chaotic manner, of the cognitive and emotive faculties. This state is similar to the "trance", when all the subject's senses are on the alert, ready to act at the slightest internal or external stimulus. In this state of great sensitivity or of extreme vigilance, the individual is precipitated into a situation of excitement, that forces him to try to overcome the usual limitations to his performances.

All these practices imply a search for the self, expressed in the control of the use, as much as in the behavior maintained during the effects of the effervescence. Although Xiberras develops her observations in a European context, dominated by lay and materialistic concepts, she maintains that the

name and the specific experience of the "trance" hark back to other cultural contexts, where such altered states of consciousness and such sensorial experiences are used as a means of perceiving and communicating with "the other world", with divine or occult powers.

Among European users of illicit psychoactive substances, the "soft" practices and the state of effervescence seem to characterize a desire for an opening to the outside world. The users seek to be in control, participating completely in their surroundings near or far. The products lead to extroverted euphoria and the beginning of the practice is built on the desire for expanded communication; the consumption happens in a communitarian way. Although rejected by the social body, the practice is valued by small groups of users, among whom the experience of the "trance" is guided and modeled so as to expand the ability to communicate and to share sensations. Therefore, this practice acquires the status of an initiation or of an integration with the group and is a real apprenticeship of the use of the drug as a mean of self control and as a new process of socialization in of an affinity group.

While the "hard" practices are based on a submission to the substances, requiring no training, the "soft" ones demand knowledge, control and initiation. This apprenticeship of another state of consciousness does not end with the ending of the immediate effects of the drug. A biological and psychological memory of the alternative sensibility lingers on and continues to act. Little by little, this experience affects the user's life changing not only his range of perception but also his view of the world.

Another distinction is that between the "use" and the "abuse" of psychoactive substances. Carrying out research among psychoactive substance users in the U.S.A, Dr. Norman Zinberg discusses the question of "controlled" and "compulsive" uses. The first has low social cost while the latter is dysfunctional and intense with very high costs.

Although there are several small differences between Xiberras and Zinberg's conceptions, Xiberras's notion of "soft practices" and Zinberg's "controlled use" share the fact that they are both governed by rules, behavior patterns and values transmitted within subcultures that develop among the user groups. According to Zinberg these social controls work in four ways:

a - Defining what is acceptable use and condemning whatever escapes from that pattern;

b - Limiting the usage to physical and social means that will allow for positive and secure experiences;

c - Identifying potentially negative effects. Behavior patterns dictate precautions to be taken before, during and after use;

d - Distinguishing the different types of use of the substances; they support the sense of duty and the relationships maintained by users in fields not directly associated to psychoactive substance use (3).

It is, therefore, evident that the use of ayahuasca, in the Santo Daime religion, seems like a paradigmatic example of Xiberras's "soft practices'", or Zinberg's "controlled use". Among the followers of the religion, the effect of the brew is traditionally understood as a "trance", in which the subject expands his powers of perception, becoming conscious of phenomena, on a spiritual level, that, by their subtlety, normally elude the senses. Besides, as mentioned above, this practice is rigorously prescribed in its minimum details, becoming an excellent example of the controlled use of a psychoactive substance.

As an example of the control mechanisms at work one may take an "hinário" ritual , as performed in the Santo Daime churches in the highly industrialized southeastern region of Brazil.

Beginning by what Zinberg would call "social sanctions, which include values and rules of conduct, it must be remembered that the ritual is considered to be a sacred celebration, demanding attitudes and behavior of deep respect. In these ceremonies the main objects of reverence are the brew and the sacred symbols, laid on a starshaped table set in the middle of the room.

So as to ensure that all those taking part are fully aware of the sacred nature of the occasion, those coming for the first time are requested to attend a lecture, where they will receive explanations and be informed of a few basic precepts, like the need to avoid alcoholic beverages and sexual activities three days before and three days after the ceremony. All must maintain a respectful attitude and avoid crossing their arms or legs during the session. It is considered that this would "cut the current". It is, also, explained that the session is led by the "padrinho" (god-father) or by a "commander" and that he and his helpers must be respected and obeyed during the ritual by all those taking part.

During the entire session, hymns are sung, the lyrics and melodies of which are simple and easy to understand, even when the individual is in a state of trance. These hymns impart the "Santas Doutrinas" (Holy Doctrines) of the Santo Daime, and constantly evoke its main themes: the need for harmony, love, truth, justice, brotherhood, "cleanliness of heart", firmness, humility, discipline... The frequent allusions to God, the Father, to the Virgin Mother and to Jesus Christ and many other spiritual beings, keep reinforcing the sacred character of the activities.

The ceremonies are frequently seen as "astral battles", in which the group of participants are the "Army of Juramidam, in the battle against evil". Like good soldiers they must wear "uniforms", that, while not being military, are quite austere, covering the body in a manner that minimizes its erotic appeal, evoking a formality reminiscent of "Sunday best", worn on occasions that demand solemn and contained behavior.

The services are preceded by the burning of incense. During the entire event, candles are kept lit and incense is burnt constantly, both inside and outside the room. The beverage, considered to be "the blood of Christ", is usually stored in a china container, on a high table, in a corner of the room. Under this table there are more bottles with extra reserves of Daime. As if to emphasize the sacred nature of the brew , a candle is lit beside the containers. Severe rules regulate the transport and stocking of Daime. Should a drop be spilt, the area must be washed immediately. The sacred nature of the occasion is further reinforced by the daimista custom of crossing oneself before drinking the sacrament.

The main symbols on the central table are the two armed Cross of Caravaca, and a rosary wrapped around it. Frequently there are also images of the Virgin and other saints and maybe even photos of Santo Daime leaders. Three candles are usually lit around the cross and flowers are used both for their decorative and their spiritual value . This table, a kind of altar, is the center of the activities. It must be treated with respect and the participants avoid bumping into it or altering its disposition.

Beyond these precepts, that, to use Zinberg's words, one might call "social sanctions", there are the "social rituals ",stylized, prescribed behavior patterns, pertaining to the "controlled" use of psychoactive substances. They have to do with the methods of acquisition and use of the substance, the

selection of an appropriate physical and social setting for its consumption, the activities undertaken after substance has been taken , and the ways of preventing untoward effects.

Under the heading of "acquisition and administration", it must be remembered that "Daime" is generally produced in "Colônia 5.000" on the outskirts of Rio Branco or in the "Céu do Mapiá" community , in the heart of the rain forest. From these places it is sent to the leaders of the other churches, who have been entrusted by the head of the religious movement with the responsibility of distributing the sacred brew. The Daime is usually stored ceremoniously in the house of the local leader, besides whom it may only be handled by a few more trusted members of the local church .

Except for cases when people who are ill receive special dispensation to take Daime in their own homes, the beverage may only be taken in the church and during the sessions. These must be presided by one of the leaders or someone designated by him. The beginning and the end of sessions are marked by a set formula and Roman Catholic prayers .

During the rites, the amount of Daime consumed varies in accordance with the nature of the work. It is usually served by one of the leader's close helpers, but, it is he who determines the right moment and the quantity to be served. Usually, each participant is given two thirds of a cup of brew to drink every two hours.

As for the physical setting, there is an official document which deals with the CEFLURIS ritual which even carries architectural recommendations for the ideal buildings for the different types of "work". However, as many of the churches are still relatively new, there is much improvisation in this regard. Works are commonly held in rooms lent by followers, in the local leader's house or in partly built Daime churches . In São Paulo, for example, one of the local churches is being built on a small landholding on the outskirts of the city. Meanwhile, the sessions are usually held in a thatch covered hexagonal structure, open on all sides, leading to a sense of intimate contact with Nature in keeping with the words of many of the songs that are sung and which abound with references to the sun, the moon, the stars and the forest.

The social setting where the beverage is taken is also subject to regulations. With the exception of a few healing works, the sessions are open to all the "fardados" (in uniform), that is, those who have officially confirmed their adherence to the "Holy Doctrines", and who have been awarded a special medal

by the local god-father: a six pointed star, showing in its interior an eagle perched on a half-moon. These followers are committed to following the Santo Daime doctrine and assume the obligation of participating in the fourteen "official hinários" of the year, wearing a special uniform for the occasion. They also commit themselves to attending the "concentration works" held on the 15th and the 30th of each month.

Eventual participants, or those not wearing uniform , must have special permission to attend. This permission depends on the participant's being familiar with the basic principles of the movement, on the need to strike a balance between the number of men and women taking part and to avoid overcrowding. Visitors are usually only allowed to take part in the more festive "hinarios" and are excluded from the heavier "concentrations" and "healing works".

Even first timers and those who have not yet chosen to become "fardados" end up behaving according to the rules, since before the work, they are usually expected to take part in an interview and a briefing session where they are explained the rules and are told about the effects they should expect from the drink . They are assured that these effects are of an essentially beneficial nature and learn how to face the eventual feelings of physical or psychological discomfort that might arise during the session. Newcomers are usually accompanied by the more experienced daimistas responsible for their invitation. During the session they act as models of the expected behavior and as agents of social control .

Even the placing of participants, in the work, is pre-determined. Like in all the activities of this religious movement, it is considered fundamental to keep men and women separate . An imaginary line crosses the room and the table diagonally creating two areas, and men and women are expected to keep to their respective sides, taking care not to "mix energies".

In each space, participants stand in line, according to their height, the taller ones at the back, and to their degree of commitment to the doctrine, those not wearing the uniform keeping behind. The married and the single are also separated and in some churches there is a line specially for children. Thus, by following reasonably objective criteria, it is possible for each participant to find "his/her place" and try and stay in it all during the work, taking care not to invade his neighbor's. This is called "se compor em seu lugar" (to compose oneself in one's place), an expression that crops up frequently in the hymns.

Should the participant feel exhausted or ill he is allowed to be absent during three hymns, after which he should return to his place or ask permission to extend his absence.

Daimistas believe that during the singing and the dancing, which consists basically in swinging the torso to the right and to the left, a "current of energy" is formed that circulates through the room, around the table. This should not be blocked or cut . So, when leaving his place, the participant must be careful to take a predetermined route so as not to cut any of the lines. For similar reasons, his place should not be left empty too long; and should his absence be prolonged, this "gap in the current" must be closed by another participant, sometimes leading to a complicated shift of several people. In works where participants remain seated, this criterion is less rigorous, although the separation between male and female must always be maintained.

Thus individual movements are constantly controlled during the duration of the brew's effects. As previously remarked, these sessions are always considered to be religious rituals. They may be "hinarios" (hymn singing sessions) , when the great majority of participants are expected to keep to their places, dancing , for periods that vary between six to thirteen hours. They may be "concentration works" or "healing works" that last from two to six hours, with the participants seated, in silent concentration or singing a given sequence of hymns.

If the work is danced, everybody performs the same simple harmonious movements, keeping to the rhythm set by a small musical group sitting around the table, and to the beat of the maracas played by many of those taking part in the work. If it is a concentration work, where the participants remain seated, they must keep their heads high and gesticulate as little as possible. Regardless of the type of work, no one must disturbing his neighbor: chatting, touching or even staring at other participants is to be avoided.

Although the placing of participants in the ritual, the aesthetic composition of the religious symbols and the words of the hymns are a constant reminder of the solemnity of the occasion , a few people are specifically designated, by the leader to maintain the expected orderliness and smooth flowing of the ceremony. They are called "fiscais" or guardians and are hierarchically organized, each one being put in charge of specific tasks, such as assisting those who are not well, cleaning up after people

vomit, or keeping an eye on those who leave the room. In all cases they should act more as facilitators than as agents of repression. Occasionally this may also be necessary , usually with inexperienced individuals, who, under the effect of the brew, behave in a troublesome or aggressive manner.

Thus the consumption of Santo Daime is highly controlled by values and rules of religious conduct, very similar to those of popular Catholicism, which are constantly brought to mind explicitly by the prayers and the hymns, and implicitly by religious aesthetics, that organizes the space, the symbols and the participants, These values and rules of conduct are reinforced by the behavioral and postural prescriptions which watched over by the guardians. Therefore, even if the effects of the ayahuasca might bring about a momentary breakdown in the rules and regulations governing social conduct, which underpin the individual's sense of identity, he can still count on a series of mechanisms to guide and protect him from social and psychic harm.

Although, ultimately not disagreeing with these observations, the anthropologist Nestor Perlongher, preferred to use other arguments to interpret what happens. He criticized the notion of "ritual control" of the use of psychoactive substances, because he felt that they implied in something too "external". He preferred to borrow from Nietzche the idea of a tension between the dionisian and the apolinian which leads people "to feel like God" during the dancing and the singing. For Perlongher the Santo Daime ritual gives an apolinian form to the ecstatic force which it awakens and stimulates, preventing it from being dissipated in vain phantasmagoria. Accompanied by various behavioral restrictions it prevents the work with this force from drifting towards the potentially dark and destructive path normally condemned by white Western culture .

Perlongher maintained that this was not a dionisian experience in the sense of a pagan carnival, nor of voluptuous excess, but that, instead of individualization, it brought about a rupture with the "principium individuationis", as well as affording a total reconciliation of Man with Nature and other men in a universal harmony and in a mystic feeling of unity. Rather than stimulating self conscience it lead to a disintegration of the superficial ego , and to an emotion that abolished subjectivity to the point of a total self forgetfulness.

Some people, not fully familiar with the daimista practices, still question the harmlessness of this ritual use of ayahuasca. They fear that the consumption of the Santo Daime might lead people to madness and society to disorder. Yet it must be remembered that the work-group set up to study the question by the Federal Narcotics Council, came to the conclusion that the Santo Daime followers were happy, tranquil people, keeping to moral and ethical standards similar to those recommended by our society, "occasionally, even in a very rigid fashion".

A better understanding of this rigidity, can be gleamed from the religious and anthropological studies of Fernando de la Roque Couto, for whom the Santo Daime rituals tend to reinforce the social structure. He considers that in these rituals, two structural elements are strengthened: hierarchical cohesion and ecological harmony with nature. (6).

The regular participation in the Santo Daime rituals, frequently leads to noticeable changes in its followers. They are often recruited among individuals who are socially stigmatized either for their impoverished condition, as in the Amazon, or for their adhesion to unorthodox values, like drug taking or free sex - common among more urbanized groups . For them the rituals stimulate a sense of self-discipline, giving them purpose and direction to their lives .

This fits in with Victor Turner's idea, that rituals periodically turn the obligatory into the desirable, putting society's ethical and juridical norms in contact with strong emotional stimulation. His considerations befit very well the Santo Daime ceremonies.

In the ritual in action, with the social excitement and directly physiological stimuli - music, songs, dance, alcohol, drugs, incense - one might say that the ritual symbol, produces a quality exchange between its two sense poles, the norms and values are charged with emotion, while the basic and lower emotions become ennobled by their contact with the social values.

The irksomeness of moral repression converts itself into "the love of virtue" (7).

<u>Notes</u>

1. Weil 1986:26.

2. Xiberras 1989:132-159.

3. Zinberg 1984:17.

4. Zinberg 1984:5.

5. Perlongher 1990:26.

6. Couto 1989:133 and 134.k

7. Turner 1980:33. (retranslated from a Spanish version)

6 - From the Solitary "Vegetalistas" to the "Collective Shamanism" of the Santo Daime

Shamanism, also called "pajelança" in Brazil, is the most important Amerindian religious institution preserved by the Amazonian mestizo. In spite of having adopted Christian prayers, placing Catholic saints in place of familiar spirits, side by side with supernatural water and forest spiritual beings, shamanism is still of the least modified Indian cultural legacies (1).

In the Shamanism practiced by the Santo Daime cult adepts it is possible to detect innumerable traces of Indian and "caboclo" (mestizo) traditions.

As already mentioned, the man, sometimes referred to as Don Crescêncio, to whom Mestre Irineu's initiation to the use of ayahuasca is attributed , was probably a vegetalista, very similar to the ones studied by Luna and Dobkin de Rios. In this comparison, Mestre Irineu is similar to the more urbanized shamans, who maintain in their beliefs and practices an Indian influence coexisting with elements of Roman Catholic, Spiritualistic, Esoteric and African traditions. The very title of "Mestre", given him by his followers and also used by members of another Brazilian ayahuasca-using sect, the União do Vegetal, reminds one of the Spanish "Maestro" used by the Peruvian ayahuasqueros.

The reports of Mestre Irineu's initiation show the basic elements present in the shamanic tradition, specially his solitary retreat to the forest, where he followed a series of rigorous dietary and other behavioral ritual prescriptions. Although the period normally attributed to his isolation in the woods is short (only eight days, vis-à-vis a minimum of six months, for the "vegetalistas" studied) one must remember how, as a rubber-tapper, it was part of his routine to spend long periods alone in the jungle. And in spite of his first experiences with the brew having been in the end of the 1910's or the beginning of the 1920's, it was only in the 30's that he felt himself ready to perform works in public, and subsequently develop his doctrine. Therefore it might be justified to suppose that his initiation extended itself for many years and that, in the 20's, he had spent other periods of retirement in the woods, learning the secrets of the brew he named Daime.

To the Amazon "caboclo", the forest and the rivers are the domains of a great variety of evil spiritual beings, the "anhangás". There are also guardian spirits that protect certain animals , plants, mountains and rivers. They are generally conceived as feminine spirits, called "mothers", that must be propitiated in various ways by hunters, fishermen, or others who for one reason or another wander through their domains. They have their place in the caboclo's religiosity but, though they might be occasionally propitiated they are not worshipped. Worship is reserved to saints conceived as providers of the means of attaining well-being, good crops, good health, etc..

With regard to "teacher plants", it is their "mothers" who are the real holders of the wisdom passed down to those who know how to use them. One of the main plants that have "mothers" is the ayahuasca. Therefore, when having visions where a "lady", the "Queen of the Forest" came to deliver her teachings, Mestre Irineu was keeping himself strictly within the traditions of the "ayahuasquero" shamans. As a "caboclo" strongly influenced by Western and Christian traditions, he does not perceive her as Indian spiritual being but as the great Catholic archetype of motherhood, Our Lady of the Conception, widely revered in the region. This way, the pagan tradition of Indian origin could be incorporated to the cult of the Catholic saints, becoming legitimate and socially acceptable.

The adoption of the double armed cross of Caravaca, under the name of "Cruzeiro", mandatory in all Daime "works", is another important symbolic support for the Christianization of the ancient "ayahuasquero" traditions. This version of the cross of Christ, though not very common in Catholic ceremonies, was already well-known to the people in the Amazon. In all of Latin America it is usually associated to magic and Esoterism, due to the use practitioners of such arts, make of the compendium of prayers that carries the name and has its image stamped on the cover.

Maybe the main consequence of this process was the incorporation of basic values of Christian ethics, pushing aside the ancient moral ambivalence that made it difficult to distinguish the good from the bad "vegetalistas". There is no place in a doctrine revealed by the Virgin Mother for the use of magic poison arrows or "virotes" and other types of sorcery used by the "vegetalistas". Maybe as a result of this christianization, the Daime shamanic work has lost many of its bellicose characteristics necessary for engaging evil spirits or witches in battle. In their place, more diffuse and generalized ideals of the

"struggle of Good against Evil", relief pain etc., were adopted. The daimista's protection was more dependent on his moral rectitude and on his obedience to rules of good conduct than on a defensive armor, like the "arkana" of the "vegetalistas".

The virotes and the magic phlegm "yachay" used by "vegetalistas" to protect them or to withdraw evil from the patients' body, are conceived as being made of the same substance, simultaneously material and spiritual. The spiritual substance can also be the ritual knowledge which gives spiritual strength or the spirit itself. So, the generic term for shaman is "yachak", in quechua, meaning " owner of a yachay" (2). With christianization , this complex and morally ambivalent conception of being "the owner of a spirit" seems to have been substituted by the concept of holy beings, like the Virgin Mother, the Celestial Father, Jesus Christ and other divine members of the Celestial Court. It is they who are requested for the power, firmness, light, wisdom and love, which the "daimista" needs in order to perform his works.

It would be unwise at this distance in time , to try to guess the reason or intentions behind certain aspects of the doctrine as taught by Mestre Irineu. Its inspired nature makes this especially difficult, and it is not our intention to suggest that it might have been the result of conscious planning to achieve certain material advantages. It is more probable that the doctrine was merely a result of Mestre Irineu's life experience and of his religious sensibility. The support he occasionally received from influential politicians, shows how well adapted his teachings were to his social milieu. But one must be careful not to overestimate such support, remembering that, on occasion, he and his followers were the target of official persecution.

Although the Daime works keep within the traditional shamanic parameters, one should take into consideration the remarks made by Couto, that, here, one is dealing with what he calls "collective shamanism". The command of the works is held by more experienced shamans, but the shamanic activity is not, exclusively in the hands of a few initiates and all participants are considered apprentice shamans and even potential shamans. Taking part in the rituals is a way of learning the art, and it is thought that any of the participants of the ritual may display shamanic powers which are considered to be latent in human nature (3).

Maybe this democratic aspect of Daime, which allows all who are interested to have access to its secrets, is the reason for the attraction it has been exerting on a new generation of followers which is quite different from the inhabitants of the outskirts of the town of Rio Branco , where the first Daime churches sprang up. According to the anthropologist Luiz Eduardo Soares, since 1988 the Rio de Janeiro research center Institute de Etudes da Religion (Institute for Religious Studies) has been carrying out research under his coordination on what is being called the "new religious consciousness". This new consciousness has shown itself to be important from a social and cultural point of view, since it questions the direction taken by modern culture, in general and that of Brazilian society, in particular (4).

Summarizing his description of the phenomenon, one might say it involves members of the urban middle class, individuals with a high degree of learning who identify with the typical modern ethical and political ideals, and who consider themselves as being "liberated", "libertarians", "open" and critical of traditional values ,especially of the "repressive burden" of religious traditions. These individuals, which may be considered to be examples of the modern individualistic lay model, have been showing themselves increasingly attracted to religious faith, to the wonders of mystic ecstasy, to the challenge of esoteric learning, to the efficacy of alternative therapies and "natural" food. For them, ecological-mystical holism substitutes the clamors of the social and sexual revolutions.

As mentioned in chapter III, from the 70's onwards, hitch-hikers with many of these characteristics, began frequenting "Colônia 5.000". They played a decisive role in the spreading of Mestre Irineu's and Padrinho Sebastião's ideals and in the founding of Daime centers in several urban and rural areas, in Southeast Brazil, which congregated a new type of follower, from the urban middle classes, young and well educated. Although the rituals were kept almost unaltered, and the same hymns were sung, the differences in physical and social context ended up having their reflections in certain practices and conceptions.

An important difference lies in their way of conceiving and relating to Nature. As already mentioned, a great part of the old frequenters of Alto Santo and Colônia 5.000 had direct experience of living near the forest, on which they relied for their survival. From this experience they retained the

memory of isolation from a wider society, of the consequent need for self-sufficiency, and of the communitarian organization of villages, where the influence of religious brotherhoods was strong.

The forest was simultaneously threatening and bountiful, demanding from all who lived near it a familiarity with its secrets. This could include a profound knowledge of the many plant and animal species it comprises, as well as the correct way to deal with the spirits and "bichos visagentos" (monsters) that inhabit it. Contact between this population and Indians was difficult. As civilized people, they considered themselves superior. Yet, they recognized the Indian's vast understanding of nature and were constantly resorting to it, also adopting many native cultural traits. In the absence of any type of medical infra-structure, shamanic practices were frequently the sole healing techniques they disposed of.

Urbanization had a strong impact on these individuals. Class' differences appeared and the "brotherhoods" began to lose prestige. Certain beliefs that in the forest are an expression of the caboclo's reality, become distant or unimportant superstitions in the urban environment. Monteiro da Silva situates the Santo Daime religion in this context, considering it a transition ritual between the two cultures.

But the urban middle class follower from Southeast Brazil sees it in a different manner. He hardly knows the forest or nature in a rough state, not previously prepared for him to enjoy and consume . Frequently, educated in good schools, within the rationalist and illuminist world view, he is completely ignorant of the Amazonian culture and its conceptions of the supernatural. In place of forest beings, his spiritual repertoire is made up of flying saucers, extra-terrestrial beings, crystals, pyramids, violet flames, Tibetan lamas, Yogis, orixás, Don Juan's teachings, as related by Carlos Castañeda, and other exotica. Nature is conceived of as intrinsically good, as long as it is respected and ecological equilibrium is maintained. The Indians are "noble savages", that hold secrets, capable of saving the planet.

These romantic and idealized conceptions, may can be understood as the result of frustration and disillusion, resulting from constant involvement in a highly technological culture, that is, however, incapable of providing satisfactory answers to the great existential questions life presents, when illness, pain, the end of emotional relationships, insecurity and death must be faced. So, the Santo Daime doctrine may become very attractive to some. As Soares says: "The model seems strong, attractive and seductive, maintaining a dialogue with theological traditions, in spite of its declared affiliation to

Christianity, and with the uncertainty of the times, weaknesses and the great human dreams ;besides, it operates on a sensorial register, allowing for an ecstatic experience of a very particular type, significantly in tune with the known stock of life experiences of the generations who had dared to alter the flow of consciousness by artificial means with aim of finding that which the 60's called "self knowledge" (5).

The doctrine and the quest for initiation makes up for the need some of the Santo Daime urban followers feel to distance themselves from society for a time, so as to get a better understanding of it. In a way this dropping out of society happens, during every the ritual, when the effects of the brew, the singing and the dancing , allow a "different reality" to be experienced for a period of time..

But, those wishing to deepen the process must end up traveling to Céu do Mapiá, in what is often their first contact with the Amazon region. The distance to be overcome, the precariousness of the means of transport, the very poor accommodation and the strangeness of the area turn the enterprise into a veritable initiation. The high point here is the taking part in the ceremonies, taking Daime, alongside the wise men of the tradition, in the heart of the forest. Many mention having the experience of being in a monastery, where all action and thought revolve around the spiritual world. Day-to-day life is left behind on boarding the canoe for a trip that usually lasts two days . Few are those who do not feel deeply and irreversibly changed by the experience.

The Southern "daimistas" relate to the forest in a romantic way that is the result of their lack of familiarity with it while the "daimistas" from the Amazonian region, see the forest with all the difficulties it presents to them in their daily life. During an expedition to Mapiá, in 1989, I was able to observe these differences. Going up the Rio Purús, for example, the boat was constantly surrounded by dolphins. The Southerners who at every moment expressed their wonder at the natural setting around them, were delighted with these animals. They were even more delighted at the sight of the pink dolphin. However, among the caboclos, these animals are considered to be inauspicious, requiring, at times, shamanic works to fight what is supposed to be their malignant influence. I have no reports of the views of old Amazonian "daimistas" on this aquatic mammal, but it seems reasonable to suppose that sharing other regional beliefs they, too, might have a negative feeling about the dolphin.

Another sign of differences in attitude can be detected in relation to different foods. The Southerners, who are usually very keen on whole foods are frequently shocked by the consumption of white rice , white sugar, canned foods, cigarettes etc. that occurs in Mapia. Except for their low consumption of alcoholic drinks, the local inhabitants tend to follow the eating habits prevailing among the "caboclos" of the region. These are marked by a generalized scarcity of provisions, and by the regular consumption of rice and beans and manioc. When it is accessible, they will seldom refuse processed foods, in some cases even preferring them. When Southern daimistas try to teach them other, healthier, more natural food habits, they are ridiculed. There was a story current , some time ago, in Mapiá, that if you wanted to label someone as boring, you called him "macrobiotic".

Mestre Irineu was known, first of all, as a great healer, a central feature in the doctrine he taught. In all churches, healing works are regularly performed, and to belong to the "healing teams" is often taken as a sign of prestige, among "daimistas". As mentioned before, though, performing cures is an individual ability, distributed in a highly heterogeneous fashion among the population. Those who have this gift highly developed , often perform in an idiosyncratic way, using specific prayers and even apparently eccentric methods - like when Padrinho Sebastião, had a young man who was prey to fits of violence, clean an ox carcass with the use of a very sharp, pointed and menacing knife.

But, in the day-to-day routine, the healing sessions, performed in the various "daimista" churches, follow the CEFLURIS ritual norms . Results are usually unspectacular, being more of a source of comfort and stimulus for the patient. On certain occasions, there is no specific patient and the works are considered to be held for maintenance of the collective well-being.

These vague conceptions, although they may not produce very visible immediately efficacious results, do not discourage followers as much as might be expected. In fact, they are in keeping with the conceptions of body and health current among adepts, of the so called "new religious consciousness". To these individuals, the body, the psyche, and the spirit are inextricably linked together and the concept of health includes elements not always perceived as articulated to the functioning of the human body such as, a values system, the way an individual relates to others, or to his surroundings. Among them, health

is conceived as the maintenance of a balance and a harmonious unity with the whole, almost a synonym for virtue, beauty and truth (6).

Therefore there is not necessarily the expectation of an immediately detectable, physical result, in these "healing sessions" , which are seen as analogous to other "alternative" healing methods , like the use of crystals or of pyramids. It should also be pointed out that the daimista leaders seldom claim their methods to be the only correct ones and allow their patients to undergo the mainstream scientific medical treatments while undergoing spiritual healing. Once more the differences between individual "ayahuasquero" shamans become apparent. The "daimistas", with a greater familiarity with forest traditions, frequently use medicinal Herb's, as aids in the treatment they prescribe their clients while the more urbanized shamans have, sometimes, only Daime to offer.

With regard to healing, another difference between modern "daimista" practices and the "caboclo" shamanism of the vegetalistas, is the classification of the illnesses that may befall someone. Traditionally, ayahuasca was used as a diagnostic tool, to determine whether an illness had a natural or magic cause. If it were natural, a treatment based on medicinal plants would be preserved. Were it magic, "ayahuasca" might be resorted to in order to help, in the shamanic work carried out directly in the spiritual world, to undo witchcraft and to fight the agents responsible for it.

Nowadays, the official disease categories and their direct causes, are accepted by urban followers of the Santo Daime. Generally speaking this population has access to medical treatment and frequently resorts to it. Padrinho Sebastião, himself, received medical treatment quite often, traveling to Rio de Janeiro on many occasions, with that aim.

Many urban "daimistas", who are educated and generally inclined to think positively of Nature and Humanity, on a whole, do not really believe in evil being engendered by hostile spiritual entities, much less in the powers of witchcraft to harm them. They believe, though, in psychosomatic reactions and are capable of understanding, in that sense, words of one of the hymns frequently sung in healing works, that says: "The illnesses that appear

Are discipline for the deserving".

In this context, although the use of Daime may lose a little of its diagnostic attributes, it is seen as an instrument which helps restore the patient's equilibrium with the Cosmos, necessary for him to summon those self-healing forces that are latent in everybody.

One should point out another manifestation of the influence of urban middle class culture on the religion with regard to the use of tobacco. Among Brazilian "daimistas" of the large metropolitan centers, smoking tends to be regarded with certain reserve. Although it is not forbidden, smoking during rituals must be done at a certain distance since tobacco smoke is considered to counteract the effect of the incense, lavishly used on these occasions. Although it is less disliked than alcohol, to many middle class daimistas, tobacco is almost the antithesis of Daime. One must remember, however, that in many reports on the traditional use of ayahuasca its use is closely linked to tobacco. As we have seen, the vegetalistas' initiation is generally considered to depend on their dominating the use of both ayahuasca and tobacco.

Among Indian and mestizo shamans, locally grown tobacco is smoked in cigarette form, during healing sessions and frequently plays an important role in the preparation of the brew when its smoke is ritually blown over the boiling liquid.

In the Santo Daime tradition tobacco also used to play a relevant part. As anthropologist Monteiro da Silva, says:

"The informers report the use of tobacco (Nicotine tabaccum) by Mestre Irineu, for topic therapeutical ends and during the rituals. Its use, linked to the immemorial religious history of the whole Amazon region continues, though, not always occupying the central role in ceremonies. However, in Colônia 5.000, it is increasingly used for both purposes. One informer (Chico Corrente) tells us he uses roasted tobacco, in the form of snuff, when "working" in the forest, since tobacco serves to balance the beings of the Queen of the Forest court. It is a sacred plant, brought in by healers, who, before disincarnating had used it, in their villages. My informer tells me these healers appear to him in order to teach him how to use it." (8)

I have never seen this use in any of the rituals I have attended, and I believe that since Monteiro da Silva wrote his report it has been discontinued, and is generally ignored by younger daimistas. Even Chico Corrente seems to have given up its use. It is worth noting that the abandonment of the ritual use of

tobacco is a common characteristic of traditional popular Brazilian religions when they begin to reach the middle classes who have been taught to think about tobacco in purely negative terms, forgetting its spiritual importance for the Indian population.

From an anthropological point of view, dietary and other types of behavior restriction, must be examined in a wider context. So, we see that ayahuasca users, certain types of food are considered to be completely inappropriate. Yet, on close examination, the restrictions vary so much among different groups that it is almost impossible to find any kind of consensus on the matter (the ban on pork, being one of the few points of general agreement). This leads one to the hypothesis that the very existence of rules is in this case, more important than their contents or, putting it differently, that taking ayahuasca must always be a treated as a special activity, requiring a change in the day-to-day routine.

This break in daily life must be marked in a manner that it touches people deeply, not only in terms of rational understanding, but, also, in more basic and physiological levels. A good way of achieving this is through a special diet. Another, equally fundamental way, is a change in several behavior patterns. Maybe, this helps understand Couto's report that, according to his informers, Mestre Irineu's followers initially used to drink sugarcane spirits and frequent prostitutes (9). This leads Couto to speculate that the taboo on sexual intercourse for three days prior and after taking the brew, and the ban on alcohol consumption during the same period, might have arisen as a means of to encourage the daimistas to keep away from drink and from prostitutes.

It is likely that Mestre Irineu's intentions went beyond mere moralism (10), and that he perceived these as some of the most important alterations of the daily patterns of life and identity, that might be imposed, once such behavior was at the core of the notions of virility and free individual expression current at the time among the caboclo population. It must be remembered that, to this day, following these precepts, presents difficulty and many "daimistas" only manage to understand and accept them completely after taking the brew many times.

Notes

1. Galvão 1976:137.

2. Luna 1986:112.

3. Couto 1989:221.

4. Soares 1990:265.

5. Soares 1990:270.

6. Soares 1990:276.

7. The grammatical patterns of the hymns reflect their popular origin and very seldom follow cultivated norms.

8. Monteiro da Silva 1985:11.

9. Couto 1989:57.

10. The importance of the precaution against alcoholic abuse among the "caboclo" population can be evaluated by the observation of Colombian Indians, inhabitants of the Sebundoy Valley, who up to the 60's held a vast knowledge of medicinal and entheogenic plants. Nowadays, due to the white man's influence, alcoholism dominates the area and ancient rites were degraded and turned into "tourist traps". During sessions, alongside ayahuasca they now drink sugarcane spirit, which provokes drunkenness and general indisposition.

- Conclusion -

We have seen that the origin of the practices and concepts of the Santo Daime religion go back to ancient Indian traditions. We have also seen that Mestre Irineu learnt the secrets of the brew from someone belonging to the tradition of "vegetalistas", who, to this day, practice shamanism among the mestizo population, in the Amazon Region.

Mestre Irineu, however, came from a slightly different context. He was a Black Brazilian , with no Indian ancestry. Although, the forest was familiar to him, he spent a good part of his life on the outskirts the Acrean towns. But, as Chaumeil puts it, the non-dogmatic and questioning character of shamanism, makes it easier to incorporate new models to its traditional conceptual framework (1). Therefore, important conceptual and practical changes were introduced in response to a given social cultural context . The main one was, probably, the emphasis given to elements of Christian origin, incorporating the Christian pantheon and most important of all, its moral code.

Attending a clientele coming from the poorest strata of Rio Branco, Mestre Irineu, exerted a comforting and assuring influence. The rituals, over which he presided, kept within the shamanic tradition of the use of entheogens, where they were not used recreationally, but to establish contact with the sacred. In this process, rather than of an escape from day to day pressures, they were used evoke and validate cultural values.

More recently, the Santo Daime doctrine has spread to other parts of Brazil and even to other countries, gathering followers, frequently young adults, from more privileged social layers, bearing the, so called, new religious consciousness. This spread has led to concerned and even repressive reactions, like in the case of the attempt to ban the use of the brew. It is occasionally alleged that its long term effects are unknown and that it might cause physical and psychological harm and contribute to social disintegration.

Researchers answer these concerns demonstrating that the use of this brew occurs in a ritual context, endowed with a very conservative ethic which has as one of its important aims the development of communities where the individual can be well integrated with his physical and social habitat.

As for possible negative long term effects on health, it has been pointed out that ayahuasquero shamans often enjoy exceptional physical and psychic vigor, even after they grow old. The followers of these religions do not usually present any health problems that might be attributed directly to the use of ayahuasca.

When such assertions show themselves difficult to deny, critics change their arguments, admitting that it is legitimate that the brew be used in the Amazon Region, among the Indians, but, not among civilized and urban groups, who would not have the necessary cultural mechanisms to control its use.

The ignorance of the Amazonian population revealed by such a view is the result of the common disregard for the social-cultural aspects of the subject and a concentration on exclusively pharmacological considerations. Commenting on paper on the subject, produced in 1992 by the Brazilian Federal Narcotics Council, that once again emphasized the psycho-cultural-social aspects of the ritual use of the ayahuasca, the doctor and Federal deputy, José Elias Murad, for instance, made an official statement criticizing the document (2). His criticisms are all of a pharmacological nature and demonstrate stereotyped and uninformed thinking when referring to anthropological concepts. Thus, he says he is against any interference in the cultural, folk and/or religious use of the brew by the natives of the Amazon Region once the ban of any of their traditions might lead to a loss of their culture as well as being very difficult to carry out in practical terms.

But, continues Murad, there is a great difference between that assertion and the contention that the Santo Daime Brew is not a hallucinogen and is a harmless product that should remain liberated and not be listed among psychoactive drugs.

This type of argument has been refuted on many occasions, including in the 1987 report, presented by the Narcotics Council work-groups that studied the question. In this report, for instance, it was shown that even though certain activities pertaining to rural areas are not to be found in the towns,

the conversion, to the Santo Daime doctrine, can lead to ritual practices and to ways of living that maintain the basic characteristics of the Amazonian religious communities. To restrict the ritual use of ayahuasca to the inhabitants of the Amazon forest means, in fact, to forbid the most important religious ceremonies of the many ayahuasca religions, which, like the Santo Daime, are predominantly to be found in the suburban countryside of large towns outside the Amazon area. This would have the self defeating effect of weakening the church structures which up to now have proven to be notably successful in the control of the use of the brew. It would also be highly damaging to the lives of the daimistas.

One should remember that the foundation of the "Círculo de Regeneração e Fé" (The Regeneration and Faith Circle), an important milestone in the history of the Santo Daime religion, happened in the 19 20's, at approximately the same time as, in Rio de Janeiro, the "Umbandista" afro-Brazilian possession religion began to be structured. This religion ,which has much in common with Daime, after a period of official persecution became very widespread and legitimate. It is inconceivable that nowadays anyone would try to ban Umbanda in Brazil again. Just as in this case and in that of other Afro-Brazilian religions, so to with the ayahuasca religions, one will find that they have come to play a crucial part in the lives of countless followers who have invested their lives in them, making them central to their individual, social and spiritual identities.

The history of humankind is rich in examples of the senselessness of intolerance and religious persecution, the results of which seem to lead inevitably to fanaticism, on one hand and arbitrary prepotence on the other. This could be seen in Brazil during the first forty years of the century. At that time the official repressive policy against the Afro-Brazilian religions caused serious social problems, laying bare the prejudiced and unjust nature of the regime. The Christian tradition itself abounds with examples of martyrdom for faith, that could serve as models for the followers of ayahuasca religions who might wish to protest against a banning of their rituals.

The Narcotics Council 1987 report ends with a criticism of the allegation that the ritual use of Daime, in the big cities, of the South, may lead to the dangers of a culture shock. According to Lévi-Strauss, quoted in the report,, "no culture is alone; they are always prone to form associations with other

cultures, and that is what allows them to build cumulative series"(3). One must not consider culture as something complete, enclosed in insurmountable boundaries. It is better to take it as a meaningful activity, conceiving of it as a process, through which man in order to act socially must constantly produce and use cultural goods (4). So, one might say that this process includes the adaptation and the attribution of new meanings to old behavior patterns and the absorption of others from other societies. In this case, there is no "a priori" incompatibility between Indian shamanic practices and modern urban industrialized society. "Cultural work" on them being enough to give them new uses and meanings, in accordance with the rest of the systems of value and meaning in operation.

Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, examining Brazilian popular religiosity from a sociological angle, criticizes the dichotomy that is often established between popular and official Catholicism. This might help us in our thinking about the question of the alleged insurmountable differences between Amazonian religious practices and those of urban Brazil. According to her, the dichotomy is not based on exact definitions, but in value judgments. This difficulty applies to any sociological use of dichotomous concepts, that seem to originate from a systematic and theoretical reasoning, that has, as its starting point, ideological conceptions of Good and Evil and not a direct examination of the reality of the case in question. As a result, instead of being appropriate to the analysis of social reality, they deformed it to suit the researcher's ideology.

Confirming this view, one can see that the criticisms of the urban use of Daime are based on an incorrect notion of how it is used in the Amazonian Region that does not take into account the fact that, from its beginning, Mestre Irineu's doctrine was directed to a population that was already urban or in the process of urbanization. The adaptations needed for larger urban areas, would, therefore, be relatively simple, similar to the ones which were necessary for the adaptation of the Afro-Brazilian religions, originating in smaller northeastern cities, to a metropolis like São Paulo, for instance. In addition, it must be remembered that, even in the Southeastern area, many churches are located in rural areas, where there is an effort to reproduce the communitarian life patterns of Colônia 5.000 or of Céu do Mapiá.

Thus, there is the possibility that this dichotomous reasoning has as its origin, the intention of validating predetermined value judgments. These seem to be directly related to the question of which

states of consciousness are to be recognized as healthy or normal. After all Medicine and Psychoanalysis frequently tend to label any kind of spiritual experience as pathological phenomena.

Therefore, an important current in psychoanalysis, following the example of Freud himself, interprets the unifying and oceanic states of mystics as a regression to a primary narcissism and to childish helplessness, and sees religions as a collective obsessive-compulsive neurosis. Shamans are frequent by described as squizophrenics or epileptics and even great saints, prophets and religious masters, like Buda, Jesus, Mohamed, have been, occasionally given the most varied psychiatric labels (6).

It is difficult for daimistas to escape from such a treatment even though they even profess ideas which are fully identified with the spiritual and social values
which are considered to be emblematic of our society such as those expressed in the formula used to close the Daime works:

> In the name of God, the Father,
>
> Of the Sovereign Virgin Mother
>
> Of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
>
> Of the Patriarch Saint Joseph
>
> And all the Divine Beings
>
> Of the Celestial Court
>
> Under the orders of
>
> Our Imperial Master Juramidam
>
> Our work is closed
>
> My brothers and my sisters
>
> Praised be God in the heights
>
> So that She be always praised
>
> Our Mother Most Holy Mary
>
> Over the whole of Humanity

Notes

1. Chaumeil 1983.

2. Speech made in the Chamber of Deputies, by Deputy José Elias Murad (PSDB-MG), 23/02/92.

3. Lévi-Strauss 1970:262.

4. Durham 1984-28.

5. Queiroz 1983 91:2.

6. Grof 1987:243.

Annex

Mestre Irineu's "O Cruzeirinho" (The Little Cross)

The followers of the Santo Daime religion consider their holy doctrine to be summarized in the last thirteen hymns that comprise Mestre Irineu's hymn collection. Grouped under the name of "Cruzeirinho", they are frequently sung during the rituals.

When reading them one must remember that "Daimistas" consider themselves as following a "musical doctrine" and that the hymns only reveal their full strength when sung to the sound of "maracas" and under the effect of the sacred brew.

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I was born in 1946, of a Scottish father and a Brazilian mother. Part of my education took place in Brazil and part in Britain. I received a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Sussex (1968) and a Masters degree in Sociology of Latin America at the University of Essex (1971). After moving back to Brazil in 1972, I finally received my doctorate in Social Anthropology at the University of Sâo Paulo (1986). I then began doing research on different aspects of drug use and was researcher at the Escola Paulista de Medicina in São Paulo. In 1994 I moved to Salvador, in the State of Bahia, where I continue to study cultural aspects of drug use and to teach anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia.
I have been member of different official Brazilian government commissions set up to study drug use in Brazil and am, at the moment, taking part in board of experts set up by the President encharged with the elaboration of the official Brazilian drug policy. I have published books and scientific articles on urban social movements, sexuality, drug use and AIDS prevention, some of which have been translated into English, French and Spanish.